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BY

LOUISE JORDAN MILN

Author of
"Mr. Wu," "The Feast of Lanterns,"
"The Green Goddess," Etc.

"The heyday of a great spirit knows no passing."

NEW YORK
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TO

MALCOLM MURREE MILN

FROM

HIS MOTHER

MR. & MRS. SÊN

MR. AND MRS. SÊN

CHAPTER I

IN this day of kaleidoscopic changes, of brand-new ultra "smartness," of emancipations so tremendous, so upheaving, so incalculably far-reaching that to some they almost seem to forecast the end of all things, still there are old bulwarks of customs, of character, of individualities and of life itself that neither change nor are changed. The Townsends of Virginia are today just what they were long before 1776.

There is only one of them left—Miss Julia—but she is they—the Townsends of Virginia; gracious, unapproachable, deft in a small, delicate way with her harpsichord, accomplished at her jellies, proud of her naperies, tyrannous and over-indulgent to her darkies, a fine judge of horseflesh, sure of herself, doubtful of you—unless your forebears of the same "first-families" caste as hers, had been born, had wived and begotten and borne, as hers invariably had, in Virginia—a stanch Episcopalian, refined to the *n*th degree, intolerant, sentimental—but too proud, and of too good form, to own or to show it—exclusive, generous—except of her acquaintance and in her opinions—a writer of feeble verses, brilliant along her own selected and approved lines, dull and ill-informed on all others, autocratic and secretly supersensitive, a *gourmet* who ate very little, an expert judge of good wines who rarely drank them—buttermilk

was her one creature weakness—charitable (although she was poorly enough off—had to count her dimes, and couldn't count with even pretense at accuracy)—charitable to every "good work" she approved of or hungry creature that came to her back door, relentlessly uncharitable to any cause she did not sympathize with and to any "beggar" who presumed at her front door.

Rosehill, the home she lived in, had more and finer magnolias than it had roses, but a great many and very beautiful roses grew at Rosehill. And in August you could smell the musk and the heliotrope right across the Potomac.

The exterior of the old red-brick "mansion" was beautiful only because so many had loved it, because birth, bridal and death so often had hallowed it, and because so many beautiful things grew about it, some of them nailed up on its mellowed red walls, some climbing there needing no nailing, for their young tendrils loved every tiny chink that time had furrowed in those old bricks.

Rosehill was on the river-edge of Virginia, only a pleasant jaunt from Washington, but it *was* Virginia. In the core of the old virgin state itself the Civil War had ruined or wrenched from them every holding the Townsends ever had had. But Rosehill remained to the Southern general's widow, and here she had come with the two children the war had left her, and lived in it bitterly enough to the hour of her death, but had kept her Virginian state as far as she could with an altered purse in an altered country, and modifying in nothing her Virginian ways or manner of life. And here Julia Townsend had grown up and lived serenely enough, for she had been in her cradle when Lee faced Appomattox, and she remembered no other home. She inherited and

kept all her mother's prejudices, but little of her mother's bitterness. She even pitied all Northerners more than she disliked them. She never by any chance broke Northern bread, but now and then she permitted some distinguished few of them to break her bread—a little "below the salt," but graciously. But no denizen of the White House could win through her gates, and she'd have eaten crusts in a thieves' kitchen, or, if it comes to that, brimstone in a place and company she was too refined ever to mention, far more willingly and with far less sense of degradation, than she would have eaten or drunk at the White House, or soiled the sole of her shoe on its carpets.

Her purse, such thin thing as it was, had freely been at the service of Grover Cleveland's election war-chest —but she never had received him. The successor in Union office of Abraham Lincoln could not visit Julia Townsend. But, beyond the stigma of "Union" the chief executive of these United States was sunk even lower in the proud, unwavering estimate of Julia Calhoun Townsend: on some days of his administration the President of the United states received—he had to—*any* citizen who chose and made it convenient to file past him, had to receive and shake by the hand. President Cleveland might have no escape from shaking hands with his own negro coachman! True—Julia Townsend had lived and thrived for nine months at the breast of a negro woman, rather darker of skin, as it chanced, than Mr. Cleveland's colored coachman—but that was different. It was *done* in Virginia, and though Mrs. Townsend had cried her heart (and her rage) out on the same faithful black breast, she never had shaken hands with her; neither she nor any other Townsend had ever done such a thing—or could have done. You might (in

her creed of caste) caress a negro, you could not greet one on such show of social parity as the shaking of hands implied; you might befriend them—clearly that was your duty, and no Townsend ever shirked a duty; you could accept their service to the last strain of their muscle, the last drop of red in their veins; even, if you were a man, you might mingle the blood in your blue veins with their blood—but you did not drink tea with them, or shake their hands. This last branch of the subject—perhaps most conveniently called the mulatto-quadroon-and-such branch, was one upon which Miss Townsend never spoke and preferred not to think; but she was quite familiar with it, and accepted it with a caste-complaisance that completely and permanently anesthetized, even if it had not killed, as probably it had, any moral revulsion, or, less than revulsion, criticism. She accepted it easily and naturally as she did all else that the "first families" had done since Raleigh named Virginia after Elizabeth until now, long after War's terrible arbitrament had made the proud virgin state a desolation and a memory. At the thought that President Cleveland might have had to shake a negro "citizen" by the hand, her nostril quivered, her spleen rose, and her old soul stiffened. She pitied Mr. Cleveland—a man she respected for much—but the dire possible official necessity had made it forever impossible that Grover Cleveland's hand should ever touch the hand of Julia Calhoun Townsend.

During one administration, a Republican administration, the unspeakable thing actually happened. And the mistress of Rosehill chuckled. She was glad. The President's wife, as determined a creature in her way as ever her soldier had been in his, and far quicker of temper, one morning for his impertinence summarily

discharged her colored coachman, and that same afternoon the dismissed negro turned up in the line of citizens that filed past the President in the Blue Room, and held out a hand that the President had to clasp—and did—probably did with an inward chuckle of his own, for he himself had sometimes something to endure from his wife's metal. *She* was furious. The story wild-fired through Washington, it crossed the Potomac long before sunset, reached Miss Townsend in her rose-and-magnolia-bound fastness, and gave her more pleasure than she often had known. Ulysses Grant may live longer and stronger in history than Grover Cleveland. But Grant was a Republican, had fought Lee, and had presumed to defeat him. Julia Townsend chuckled wickedly, and drank wine, quite a small glassful of a priceless vintage, at her solitary supper that night.

She had been but a girl still during the Cleveland and Grant administrations, but a girl with all a woman's venom in her hot Southern heart. And she had come into her heritage—such as the War had left it—in her motherless girlhood; for the mother had not lived many years after the defeat of the Confederacy. Hate killed her. The men of the South forgave. The women could not—some of them have not even yet.

If Rosehill was but on the edge of Virginia, and a little discounted by its too-nearness to the disloyal capital from which only the river saved it and to which Long Bridge linked it, and lay not far from Arlington, where the "blue" slept as well as the sainted "gray" and many civilians stanchly Northerners, it was no alien or unsuitable residence for a Townsend. Townsends had owned it for more than a century. A Townsend had built the house. Only Townsends ever had lived in it. Miss Julia had inherited it from her mother, for the

mother had been born a Townsend and had married a second cousin. Julia Townsend had a double right to all the Townsend traits and possessions. Those possessions, great once, had dwindled now to Rosehill and a narrow (even for one) income, but the traits flourished and were strong, and Julia had her full double share of them. The dwindled and still dwindling income scarcely sufficed for the decent upkeeping of the simple old place, and the quiet old gentlewoman; but they managed—Rosehill, Miss Julia Townsend and her negroes: Rosehill flaunted its flowers, the darkies obeyed their imperious, kindly ole' missus, and Julia Townsend wore her poverty as a duchess is supposed to wear her own ermine and her husband's strawberry leaves—and usually doesn't.

Social Washington courted Miss Townsend—partly because she was well worth courting, partly because she rather despised it, not a little because, when she did offer hospitality, her "parties" were the pleasantest functions that ever came the capital's way.

You couldn't "drop in" on Miss Julia—no matter who you were or why you came. Her kitchen door was always on the latch. Her front door was guarded stiffly. Into no function of hers could you penetrate casually. You were hopelessly debarred unless she had sent you "a card" of invitation—which was a card only in name. She invariably wrote the "cards" herself, in her fine spidery hand, on sheets of cream-smooth, velvet-thick paper, scorning the modernity of engraved invitations. If she consented to receive you at all, she paid you the compliment of telling you so in her own handwriting, which not only saved the expense of engraving, and seemed to her more befitting her dignity, but filled considerable time for her with an occupation she much

enjoyed. Her hair-line handwriting was peculiarly beautiful, and she delighted both in producing it and in displaying it. Julia Townsend had many vanities. But they all were innocent ones, and womanly. And, if her avoidance of engraved "At Home" cards was one of her many economies, it was (and her others were not) an accidental one. And her note-paper was a proud extravagance. Only the best paper was good enough, she thought, to record the honor of an invitation accorded from Rosehill, or to be embellished with such beautiful writing as hers.

On "Second Thursdays," as her visiting cards indicated in the lower left-hand corner—her visiting cards were engraved—Miss Townsend was "At Home," but it was for no one to venture to call unless Miss Townsend had "left cards" upon you. She called on no one; but once a month, unless it was Lent, "Uncle Lysander," dressed in his speckless best, crossed the river and, with much ceremony and many bows, left a card of his mistress's upon those in the capital whom she cared to honor with her acquaintance. And if such favor had not been shown you, you might be very sure that you could induce Uncle Lysander neither to announce you to Miss Townsend's presence, nor to admit you inside her front door on a second Thursday, or at any other time. A woman of very high Washington social rank once had brought with her to a garden party at Rosehill, without permission or invitation, an English Countess who was staying with her. Miss Townsend had received Lady Haverhill graciously, had chanced to like, and approve, her cordially, had sent cards to her—by Lysander—and, when the Englishwoman had moved into quarters of her own at Willard's, had invited her to dinner. But Mrs. Wentworth never again received a card of Miss Julia Town-

send's or admission to Rosehill. You had to be very careful indeed with Miss Julia—if you wished to retain her acquaintance. Even to men she indicated her willingness to receive them by means of a card and Uncle Lysander. Women in Washington did not, as a rule, leave visiting cards for their men friends. Miss Townsend saw fit to: that was sufficient.

Except for her servants she lived quite alone in the old red-brick house. At the close of the war they had been three—the mother and two daughters. But Mrs. Townsend had died and Clara, the elder girl, had done something very much worse.

Clara had been twenty when the guns had spit at Fort Sumter. Julia had been born on the day of the first Battle of Bull Run. Of their four brothers two —the twins—had been a little older than Clara, the other two, one a year, one two years younger. Naturally all four had fought for the Southern Cause. Three had fallen, as their father had, in battle; Rupert, the youngest, had died in a Northern prison. If Ruth Townsend had been without reasonableness in her hatred of the North, she had not been without cause.

But it was Clara Townsend—who lived even now, though whether she did or not her sister did not know and did not perhaps care—who had killed their mother. The death of a man, in battle, with his face to the foe and his breast set square to the guns, rarely kills a woman who loves him. Clara had married a man who had worn not a gray but a blue uniform in the terrible fratricidal war—a runaway marriage, of course. None other had been possible. The mother never had mentioned her name again; even the darkies who had adored her never whispered her name among themselves—not even the "mammy" who had suckled her—they were

far too ashamed of her. And Julia, a baby still at the close of the war, soon after which it had happened, had no memory of her sister.

Almost from her birth Miss Julia had lived a solitary life. She kept her life aired, even somewhat sunned, but she shared it, or her self, with none. Every one in Washington knew her, or tried to; and she knew every one whom she considered worth knowing, or deserving it—rather different things sometimes—but she had no intimates. She lived apart.

The three persons who came nearest to intimacy with Miss Julia Townsend, so near it indeed that she had accorded them all permission to "come and see me whenever you like," were about the last people in Washington society—needless to say they were in it—whom one might have expected her to accept, let alone welcome.

They, as it happened, as yet were unacquainted, each with the others.

Miss Julia's most nearly intimate friends, and the three she best liked, were: a woman physician who, though of high Southern birth, had, like the not-to-be-named sister Clara, disgraced herself by becoming the wife of a Northern man; an English girl of no social position, beyond that of a nursery governess who chanced to be a relative of her titled employers; and a young man, in a minor and rather hazy position at one of the legations—a Chinese.

CHAPTER II

MISS TOWNSEND was "At Home"—and so were the roses, the strawberries, all the delicate eggshell china and the old heavy silver. She was giving her annual garden-party. And that she might entertain her

guests delicately and amply—as a Southern woman should—it had been shortened commons at Rosehill for many a week. Not the servants—they had fared as they always did, and so had the beggars who had gone to the kitchen door—but the mistress of Rosehill had discontinued the late-dinner meal—which she called "supper," and which she liked—and had gone to bed each night at dusk, and had refrained from lighting a candle when sleep would not come. That had been a veritable sacrifice on the function-altar of hospitality. Next to drinking buttermilk the thing that Miss Julia most enjoyed was reading novels in bed—by the soft, clear light of four or five wax candles. And she, complete hostess that, true to her blood, she was, had imposed on herself other personal curtailments and economies that cost her less but saved her purse more. She had not gone to a concert or seen a play during her "retreat" of economy. But, as it chanced, there had been no play that she much wished to see at a Washington theater just then. She was an inveterate theater-goer and she rarely denied herself a matinée that called her. She always went alone, but she always sat in the best seats, and Uncle Lysander, his dear black face shining with importance and his great splay hands encased in snow-white gloves, always waited outside to escort his mistress home, whether the matinée ended in the dusk and dark of winter or in the clear light of summer—if so side-by-side a word as "escort" can be used of his attendance close behind Miss Julia. And a "good" concert she missed very rarely indeed. Miss Julia did not care for classical music, but she liked to think that she did, and she and her best bonnet, and her rose-point-lace collar, fastened carefully (not to injure the priceless mesh) by a gold and cameo breast-pin that had belonged to Martha Wash-

ington, were as sure to enrich the parquet seats as Brahms or Grieg or Haydn or Liszt were to appear in the program. In winter she wore gray or dun-colored velvet (first made in Paris for a Mrs. Townsend before Robert Edward Lee was born); in summer thin-textured silver or lilac silk. In winter she wore a costly Cashmere shawl, in summer one of heavily embroidered white Canton silk. The Cashmere shawl had a skimp, narrow, parti-colored fringe; the Chinese one had a sumptuous, knotted fringe of its own time-deepened ivory silk. But she always wore the gold and cameo breast-pin and the deep collar of rose-point; she always wore gloves of delicate kid, made by a famous French manufacturer, and exactly matching her gowns; in winter her black velvet bonnet (always the same bonnet) nodded an ostrich feather that matched her gown of the occasion as perfectly as did her gloves; in summer, her bonnet of white chip paid the hue of her dress the same ostrich feather compliment. And winter or summer, she wore uncompromisingly thick, stout leather boots—but they were well cut and with heels as high as a fashionable girl's. She always took her program home with her. She had volumes and volumes bound in limp morocco. She often spoke of them—and sometimes she sent Lysander to purchase a piano score of some "morceau" that had charmed her, or that she thought had. But, to her credit, she never attempted their execution on her own yellow-keyed harpsichord. She "liked to have them, to think them over." Her own greatly favorite musical compositions were "The Maiden's Prayer" and "Her Bright Smile Haunts Me Still." She played them both tenderly—if not too brilliantly. And "Dixie" was her anthem.

The day was perfect. The Potomac ran a "changeable-silk" glitter of blue and gold. The sky, as blue

as the river, was soft and fluffed with billows of snowy clouds. The grass was almost as smooth and green as a well-kept English lawn, and the old red house was a-nod with roses, its very bricks fragrant from the magnolias nailed there. Great beds of mignonette cut great swathes of gray through the green of the grass, and lay like soft, thick rugs at the edge of the house.

Miss Julia, wearing a befrilled cream organdie delicately printed with pink wild-roses and forget-me-nots more turquoise-tinted than growing forget-me-nots ever are, stood under the giant juniper tree receiving her bidden guests. The frills of her full gown were narrowly edged with lace, and she wore Madame Washington's brooch, pinning her befrilled organdie fichu; but the collar and heirloom of super rose-point was laid away in its tissue and lavender. To-day she wore brightly beaded bronze slippers, very high-heeled, pointed-toed. At home she never wore boots; beyond her gates she never wore anything else. A pair of shoes she did not own, and never had. She wore many valuable rings and black lace mitts on her fine white hands, and held in her right hand a valuable lace handkerchief, which nothing would have induced her to use for the purpose for which handkerchiefs are supposed to be made and bought. It had been "in the family" for six generations, and it had never been *used*. In her other hand she carried a tortoise-shell lorgnette which she never used either, for she had no need to—her sight still was perfectly good —and Julia Townsend was about the last woman in the world to affect an infirmity that did not afflict her. She had considerable manner, but no affectations. Her manner, always elegant, sometimes more than a little starched, was not a pose. Her manner was she, and belonged to her as legitimately as did the many good clothes

she had inherited, as she had it, with birthright from several generations of Virginia ancestors. She also carried in her left hand an exceptionally fine, long-stemmed, very fragrant rose, which she sniffed frequently. If she shook hands with a guest, the lace handkerchief went for the moment to keep company with the handsome lorgnette and the big red rose. She did not shake hands with every guest that she welcomed, but to all her welcome was gracious, and she did shake hands with each guest that bade her adieu, and contrived to convey with the lingering touch of her old, maidenly fingers how much she regretted the departure.

Every one she had privileged to do so had come. Almost always it was so. Few ever missed an opportunity to visit Miss Julia at Rosehill. There was a perfume and repose both about the woman and her home that were strongly inviting, and that every one found strangely refreshing, and that some also found surprisingly stimulating. And her invitations were too scrupulously limited to be lightly disregarded. Miss Julia was old-fashioned, and every one knew she was poor. (Indeed, she boasted of it indirectly—too highly-bred to boast openly of anything—frankly proud of her poverty, since it was part and piece of General Lee's defeat.) To be reported in the *Star* as having been among Miss Julia Townsend's guests gave a social cachet which nothing in the capital itself could give.

Every one who could be was at Rosehill today. And in several ways the gathering was more catholic than a superficial intelligence might have expected. It was natural enough that a poor public school teacher should rub shoulders here with a California millionaire, and the well-known actress seemed a not inappropriate guest, since her personal character was as unsmirched as her

complexion was natural, and the South always has honored all the great arts. But a Jewish banker and his beautiful daughter, a Punjabi prince and the Siamese Minister might have seemed to some a little unaccountable.

Miss Townsend was a stanch Episcopalian, but she had no theological narrowness. She respected Jews—if they were orthodox; she'd little tolerance for any apostasy—"character" was the human quality she most valued, and her love of beauty—especially the beauty of women—was almost inordinate. That accounted for Moses Strauss and his lovely daughter, Esther. The Siamese Minister and the Punjabi prince were not beautiful, and neither had been in Washington long enough yet to have established, or, on the other hand, to have lost, any great reputation for personal or intellectual character. It was the fashion just then to "know" all the Orientals one could—but that was no sesame to the door of Rosehill. Miss Julia drew a very wide distinction between Africa and Asia, and she liked to show that she did.

Four girls sat chatting idly a little way from the small linen-and-lace-covered table they had impoverished of its cakes and ice-creams and bonbons.

Molly Wheeler—her father was an Oregon Senator—Lucille Smith—hers was on the supreme bench—and Mary Withrow, the daughter of the minister of Washington's most exclusive church—or course, an Episcopalian church—were all dressed expensively in glistening white, as was almost every woman here on this very hot day, and each wore a pretty and costly hat. The fourth girl was hatless and her simpler gown was a soft but vivid green.

"You look as if you'd grown here, Ivy," Mary Withrow exclaimed not unreasonably. For the English girl's

gown was just the color of the young live-oak leaves that so interlaced above them where they sat, great lush ferns growing thickly against the trees' silver trunks, that a sort of brilliant green twilight seemed all about them, although it was scarcely a quarter past four yet.

"I wish I had," the girl in green replied. "At least, I wish I lived here."

"Don't you like Washington?" Lucille demanded sharply. The jurist's daughter was stanchly *and sharply* loyal to Washington—grateful to it, too, perhaps, for the Smiths had come to it *via* several less pleasant localities.

"I hate teaching kiddies," Ivy said with an impatient shrug.

"But your own cousins are such dear little things," Mary remonstrated gently.

"I suppose they are," Ivy Gilbert conceded, "dear little things, and they certainly are my cousins—but a long way off. It isn't the children I object to—it's having to teach them. I like Blanche fairly well, and I'm fond of Dick—sometimes—and I daresay I'd be quite fond of them, if I didn't see them often, and never *had* to."

"You don't like teaching?" Mary said, incredulously. "Oh, I'd love to, more than anything else, if only I knew enough! And you don't like to teach? Truly?"

"I loathe it. You don't know whether you'd like it or not—until you've tried it. You'd know then. But you don't have to 'know enough' or to know much of anything. Education's a very minor asset—at least for a nursery governess, and I suspect for any other sort of teacher. There's only one thing you need: patience, patience, patience—and then patience! Eternal patience! Cow-like, door-mat patience. Oh, I loathe the whole

show! Emma's kind enough. Charley's a dear. But I loathe it all. I feel stuck in a ditch! And I want to move and to *be*. I want to *taste* life, and make some of it. But there, let's talk about something else!" The young, passionate voice broke off impatiently, and the girl clutched a great fern from its root and began fanning herself with it slowly. And the scarlet peppers she wore dangling at her breast, a splendid splash of Oriental color on the exquisite jade of her linen gown, shook passionately as she moved.

The other girls wore flowers—tea-roses and violets—as girls should. But Ivy had robbed Miss Julia's kitchen-garden of a handful of red, red peppers, and fastened them in her gown. And odd as the garniture was, no one had commented on it. Ivy Gilbert always was doing something "queer," and no one had exclaimed at her wearing of "vegetables." And certainly the scarlet peppers suited her. Her passionate, brunette face, with its soft, mutinous, gold-brown eyes, its vivid, curved lips, its crown of dark, curling hair, and its accentuation of darker eyebrows and up-curling long lashes, looked more Spanish than English, as she sat there in the bright green "twilight," in her jade-green gown, and the brilliant red peppers jolting each other at her breast.

Lucille hastened to change the subject.

"Why didn't you come to Mrs. Trull's breakfast?" she asked.

Ivy shrugged again.

"You don't like Maggie Trull, do you?" Molly asked. "I do, so much; why ever don't you?"

"She kisses me!" Ivy said angrily, just as two men came through the gleaming trees. "I hate to be kissed! It's a loathsome, indecent thing. I never can forgive any one who kisses me!"

The men had heard. The white-haired elder smiled a little under his white mustache. But his younger companion gravely regarded the girl who had spoken, and approval lit in his black, inscrutable eyes.

He, the younger man, too, looked a little Spanish, but less so than Ivy Gilbert did. He was not tall, but fully of medium height: a very handsome man, dark, beautifully built, scrupulously dressed, wearing his good garments indifferently, the flower in his coat as red as the girl's scarlet peppers, his glance direct, noncommittal, a repose about him which only many centuries of culture can give. His passive face was clear-cut and strong and scarcely more brunette than Ivy's own.

It was not the girl herself that arrested him first. It was what she said—for it struck a century-old note in his being, and it answered with a throb. He was twenty-seven, a citizen of the world. But he, too, thought kissing an impertinence and a nastiness—and he never had offered it, or suffered it.

Evidently a foreigner—he might have passed to many for an Italian, a Rumanian, a Greek, a Spaniard, or a Russian—of birth. The birth was indubitable, whatever the birthplace.

But one who had traveled far, and watched, would have recognized him as what he was, Chinese.

CHAPTER III

THE men lifted their hats, and passed on. General Cordez knew Lucille and had met the Senator's daughter, but he felt no necessity to join the group of girls on the grass, and no impulse. And the younger man, knowing none of them except for a very slight

"bowing acquaintance" with Miss Smith, showed no impulse—if he felt any.

"That was Sên King-lo," Lucille said, almost excitedly, when the men were out of earshot. "I wish General Cordez had stopped and introduced him to you. He's all the rage. I did just meet him once. But he never gives me a chance to push it a mite."

"What is he—what's his nationality?" Ivy asked.

"Chinese."

Ivy's lip curled. "What queer cards Miss Julia knows," she said.

"Yes, doesn't she? And the last woman in the world you'd think would," Mary Withrow agreed. "Papa wouldn't like me to know some of the people Miss Townsend does."

Their talk debouched then to fashions and clothes. Ivy followed it with listless inattention. The others tossed and tore it eagerly and hotly. None of them, not even Lucille, who "had heaps of her things from Paris—and paid heaps for them, if you want to know"—cared quite as much for pretty and becoming hats and gowns as the English girl did. But she had so little money to spend on what she wore that talk of it always rather stuck in her throat.

The well-born and the well-clothed, the traveled and the noted, strolled about the festival grounds, admiring the flowers, sat in groups at the exquisitely laid little tables that dotted and white-starred the shady nooks, an attendant white-clad darky, important and cordial at each, keeping the flies off with long white-handled brushes of peacocks' feathers, and replenishing the dishes and baskets of ice-cream, charlotte russe and fruit, the cups of tea and coffee, the jugs of butter-thick cream, and the cold-beaded glasses of cup—delicate cup of claret or

moselle or cider for the "ladies," mint juleps in strong perfection and very tall glasses for the men guests. No one could better Uncle Lysander at mixing juleps—he wore white cotton gloves when he pulled the mint from the kitchen brook-side—and few could equal Julia Townsend, of the Townsends of Virginia, at the concocting of cup.

Towards sunset, all the burnished hour's splendor of colors glowing and melting over the blue and silver Potomac, a tinkle of banjos came from behind the tomatoes and asparagus beds. Miss Julia never permitted her blacks to obtrude jarringly their gift of ripple and rhythm, but always banjos in the distance played her garden party guests out of her gates. And as "Dearest May" signaled softly Miss Julia moved slowly gatewards.

"Now darkies come and listen, a story I'll relate;
It happened in de valley ob de ole Ca'lina State."

The Italian Minister bent over Miss Julia Townsend's hand.

"Down in de cornfield whar I used to rake de hay—"

Lady Giffard had had "such a perfect afternoon."

"I worked a great deal harder when I thought of you,
dear May."

A great diva paused a moment to listen, as she held her hostess' hand.

"O May, dearest May, you are loblier dan de day,
Your eyes so bright dey shine at night
When de moon am gone away."

The diva's eyes filled with tears. "*They* are the sweetest singers," she said softly, and went quickly.

Miss Julia flushed delicately. She ruled her negroes with no lax hand—but she loved them. She knew their faults, blackberry thick! She knew their virtues, their worth and loyalty. And she never heard their music, the blackbird music that flutes up from their ebon throats, the music that tripped from between their broad finger tips and their banjo-strings, without an affectionate throbbing in her own heart.

"My massa gabe me holiday, I wish he'd gib me mo—

Miss Julia went a step beyond the gate with Miss Ellen Hunter—for Miss Hunter was older than herself, and very poor.

"I t'anked him berry kindly as I pushed my boat from sho—"

Miss Julia gave a Chicago banker her finger tips; the Jewish financier a fuller clasp.

"And started for my dear one I longed so for to see—"

The sunset was fainting on the river's breast. The banjos thrummed more softly, the sugared, golden voices sank almost in a whisper. Servants were hanging here and there a lantern on a low-branched tree—long, iron-ringed, glass, plantation lanterns. That, too, was a signal—not a signal to go; a signal to stay. It meant that there would be supper presently for a favored few—youngsters probably. Julia Townsend loved to gather "boys and girls" about her for a more intimate hour when her statelier hospitalitied had been banjo-dismissed, and already she had told one here, one there, "I hope you can stay until ten." And they knew there'd be fried chicken and quivering icy jellies, and *perhaps* a little dancing on the lawn—and a punctilious, if pompous, darky servant

to see you home, if you were a girl whose chaperon had been delicately and tunefully sent home.

"And 'twas from Aunt Dinah's quilting party I was seeing Nellie home."

Lena Blackburn looked at Miss Julia longingly. Miss Julia wished her good-by very kindly. Mr. Sên saw the tiny comedy, and so did Ivy Gilbert. Their eyes met—just that.

"On my arm her light hand rested, rested light as ocean foam."

The last sent-home had gone, and Miss Townsend turned back towards the house.

"I want to be in Dixie——"

Julia Townsend stood at attention—and so did the remaining guests gathered near her. Ulysses S. Grant and Philip Sheridan must have done that in the presence of Julia Townsend listening to "Dixie"—and the soldier who rode a breathless twenty miles from Winchester to Cedar Creek would have done it with the sunny sweetness of a prince—like the prince he was. The South had its Barbara Frietchies—the North had its Stonewall Jacksons.

"I want to be in Dixie——"

The brown English eyes and the black Chinese eyes met again. Something nearly a smile touched the girl's lips. And she noticed that the Chinese—Senn, she thought Lucille had said his name was—held his hat in his hand.

Was *he* staying to supper then—a Chinese? Surely not.

But, as it proved, he was. He not only stayed, but he sat on Miss Gilbert's left hand. She was not overpleased.

Of course it was for Miss Julia to select her own guests. That was understood and accepted. But the nursery governess did a little resent the supper seating arrangements. Miss Julia herself made them.

Ivy Gilbert was too thoroughly English to draw the social color-line as white Americans drew it. She had seen Hindoos and Japanese on a perfect—or so it seemed—parity with the other undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge. A duchess, who was an acquaintance of Lady Snow's, had, to Ivy's knowledge, made straining and costly efforts to secure as her guest a Persian prince not many seasons ago, and on doing it had been both congratulated and envied. She had seen her own Royal Family in cordial conversation with a turbaned Maharajah, even the royal lady who was reputed most exclusive and proud. And, though her own small experience of social functions at home had been rather of Balham and West Kensington than of Mayfair, she would have been not only interested but flattered to know well any Indian—of sufficient rank and European or Europeanized education . . . but a Chinese—well, really!

However, the fault was far more Miss Julia's than his—he couldn't help being Chinese, of course—and since he was here, Miss Julia's invited guest, it was for her, another guest, not to be impolite. So, perhaps feeling that a more brilliant remark would be a *faux pas*, too unfair a strain on Chinese *savoir faire*, she turned towards Sên King-lo slightly and asked him pleasantly, "How do you like America?"

A smile flickered across the man's mouth.

"Very much as the curate liked his egg, Miss Gilbert,"

he told her gravely, then added with a franker smile, "which is how I like most countries, I think."

"Ah! You are homesick!" But having said it, the girl blushed angrily—angry with herself for having said what she felt, as soon as she'd said it, to have been far from in good taste.

"Terribly," Sên said gravely—"sometimes."

"I'm sorry I said that," she said quickly. "I ought not," she added with a little guilty sigh.

"But," he disputed her courteously, "I am glad to answer any question you are good enough to ask. And, if there is *one* thing of which no man should be ashamed, it is being homesick, surely. And you made me no risk of criticizing your country—since you are not American—but English."

"How do you know?"

"You told me."

"I? We never have spoken to each other until now."

"But you told me yourself, Miss Gilbert. I heard you speak as General Cordez and I were walking together. I heard you say several words. If I had heard you speak but one, I'd have known that you were English. An English voice in English speech is one of the few things that cannot be mistaken."

The girl flushed again—delicately this time, and with pleasure.

"We Chinese," he continued, "have a proverb, 'If one word misses the mark, a thousand will do the same.' And, if one English word spoken by an educated English voice does not proclaim nationality as nothing else can, it is because it falls on very dull or quite deaf ears."

"Have you many proverbs in your language?" she asked, fishing about a little desperately for her next thing to say.

"Millions," he said decidedly. "And we all know them all, and all say them at once. Probably at this moment, in China, four hundred millions of people are saying, 'He that grasps, loses,' or 'The knowing ones are not hard, the hard ones are not knowing,' or 'The serpent knows his own hole,' or 'Those who know how to do a thing do not find it difficult; those who find it difficult know not how to do it,' or 'Even the tiger has his naps.' No, though, I am wrong. It is both night-time and day-time in China now—my country sprawls so wide from East to West—but I have no doubt that at home, easily a hundred million Chinese are quoting time-honored adages and proverbs at this moment."

"How perfectly terrible!" she laughed.

Sên King-lo laughed back with her. There was no familiarity in his laughter, but a good deal of deferential good-fellowship.

"I have never heard Chinese spoken," Miss Gilbert told him. "It is a terribly difficult language to learn—for a foreigner, I mean, isn't it?"

"No," Sên said stoutly. "That is always said—has been said ever since Marco Polo's time. But it is not true. Chinese is very easy to learn really."

"I have never heard it," she repeated.

"Would you care to? Shall I?"

"Please." She scarce could make any other answer.

He said something in a low, clear voice. It ought to have reached her alone under the hum of the general table talk. But at Miss Julia's board no one spoke shrilly, and, whatever happened in China, in the dining-room of Rosehill all did *not* speak at once. And the inevitable rise and fall of intonation—which is nine-tenths of the Chinese vocabulary—rang it through to others. Two or

three people stopped talking, and half a dozen pricked up questioning ears.

Miss Julia challenged her guest frankly. "What are you saying?" she demanded.

Sên King-lo bowed his head towards his hostess, and answered:

"Something that Confucius said a long time ago, Madame. This: 'Our greatest glory is, not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.'"

"True and admirable!" Miss Julia said proudly. Her old eyes flashed. She was thinking of Appomattox—of a cause that she never would yield as permanently lost. And Sên King-lo, a far-off look in his dark, masked eyes, was thinking of Shantung. The East and the West do meet sometimes in the selfsameness of human emotions.

CHAPTER IV

THE supper was long. It might have been called a little heavy, if the food had not been so very good. It is not of the South to offer a guest a simple meal. Miss Julia gave her guests more than fried chicken and quivering ice-cold jellies. She gave them scalloped oysters, she gave them corn-oysters (an entirely vegetable but very "filling" dish). She gave them gumbo, and pickles made out of water-melon rinds. She gave them several salads. The oysters were not the sole shellfish, and the sweets—Miss Julia called them all "the dessert," and Uncle Lysander called them all "puddin'"—covered the shining tops of two great priceless sideboards, and their overflow covered one of the long, narrow side-tables. They sat a long time at supper. The oysters had given place to lemon sherbet as Sên King-lo had quoted

Confucius, and after the sherbet he turned and talked for a time to his left-hand neighbor, and the English girl chatted to the New Orleans man on her right. But after a course and another, they spoke together again—the merest social decency, since their hostess had put the girl on his right hand.

"It *sounded* hard—very nearly impossible to learn," Ivy said, taking up their chat just where Miss Julia had torn it.

"Will you try?" Sên asked lightly. "I'd like to teach you—Chinese."

"I don't think you would," the girl retorted. "I'd not like to teach any one anything. I teach for my living."

"You!" the Chinese exclaimed—frank and honest admiration in tone and glance. "How young you are to know enough to follow that great career. The greatest of all careers, we think."

"I don't know anything at all," Ivy assured him. "I only teach C-A-T—cat; B-A-T—bat; and wash their faces—my cousins Dick and Blanche—when they'll hold their faces still long enough. And when they don't their mother scolds me. I hate it all—and so do they. But I have to—to earn my living."

Sên King-lo looked more approval than sympathy. Poverty is no social bar-sinister in China, scarcely a handicap in what, until the Manchus fell, was the soundest and truest democracy in human history—not a rabble democracy, but a democracy of dignity, justice, fair play and spiritual equal chance.

"Yes, I should like teaching you Chinese," he insisted.

"Why ever, why?" the girl demanded discouragingly.

"To pay a debt," he replied with a smile. "We Chinese must be free of debt on our New Year, and that

would just about give me time. And you—I know what you think—you think you'd find my language dull, and that you never would have any use for it. But you may go to China one day, and then you'd find it very useful."

"I go to China? No such luck! Jersey City perhaps, or even Margate, after we get home again. But I shall never see your country, Mr. Sên—or Calcutta, or Damascus, or Venice, or Madrid. I shall travel in narrow gray ways always. It is written."

Sên shook his head. "We never can tell," he reminded her.

"I can," she said briefly.

He laughed at her again. Then—"Well, but, let me get out of debt then."

"What is the debt?"

"May I tell you? I wonder. You, I fear, Miss Gilbert, will not like it. It will not seem to you a compliment. But it *is* one—from me. I'd like to tell you. Shall I?"

The girl nodded—a little indifferently, a little coldly.

"I thought," Sên answered gravely, "when I saw you there in the live-oak trees this afternoon, that you looked something like a Chinese girl."

Ivy Gilbert stiffened, her eyes grew icy. Sên King-lo had been right. She did not like it at all.

But Sên King-lo went steadily on. "Forgive me, if you dislike it, resent it so much. To me—it was a sip of cold water in a parching land, on a parching day. Perhaps I was wrong. Probably I was—for I never have seen a Chinese girl."

Miss Gilbert's resentment receded before her surpise.

"You never—have seen—a Chinese girl!" she said blankly.

"Not a lady," he told her. "One sees coolie girls, of course—everywhere. But I have been from home a great

many years now. When I was a boy Chinese ladies were not seen outside their own homes—as so many of them are now, I understand. And I had no sisters. My mother was only a girl when she left us, but I do not remember my mother. I was very young, a baby, when she went. I know a Chinese lady here and there: here in Washington, two; several in Europe—but they all are married ladies—and, too, they often seem to me a little un-Chinese, because they wear English clothes and eat with a fork—as, for the very same reasons, I, no doubt, seem not quite Chinese to them."

Miss Gilbert glanced down involuntarily at his hand —he was lifting food with his fork, quite accustomedly— and she looked up again, a question she would not have asked for worlds in her eyes.

"Yes, indeed," Sên told her, "I can use chop-sticks. I can eat ice-cream even with chop-sticks—if it is not very feeble—melted. But I like your forks much better."

The girl colored slightly in her surprise. She had yet to learn that many Chinese can read thoughts almost as easily as they can read printed words.

"I never have known a Chinese woman at all well. Miss Townsend is my closest woman friend. Odd that, isn't it?"

"Yes," she agreed.

"And I never have seen a Chinese girl of our own caste."

Did he mean his own caste, or his and hers? Again the man had startled her. It was a rather weird thought that in his opinion (in her opinion it was an impossibility) she and any Chinese might have caste in common —caste or any other social bond.

"I knew you were English before I saw you, because I had heard your voice first. But when I looked to where

the voice had sounded, it seemed to me—just for a moment—that China was not the long way off that it has been for years. You were wearing some material the color of much of our rarest jade. Almost all the ladies here were wearing white. It often looks to Chinese eyes as if every woman in the West went into mourning as soon as summer comes. That always jars a little. We love summer—the sun, the flowers, the heat, all that it stands for, and promises. Even our terrible Yellow Sorrow laughs and is happy when summer comes."

Ivy Gilbert had no idea what he meant. She never had heard of the Yangtse-kiang. She scarcely knew whether China had a river. But Sên King-lo, though he had had considerable gage of how dense the West's ken of the East was, did not suspect her ignorance. Perhaps —because of the jade-green dress, Sên King-lo was forgetting himself a little. Even a Chinese man does that—under certain provocation—at twenty-seven.

"White is our 'black' you know."

Yes, she had heard that—though it isn't quite true; for the hemp garments of Chinese bereavement are nearer a dun drab than they are to the white that snow and lilies wear.

"Your gown struck a note of Chinese color, those scarlet peppers"—she was wearing them still—"struck another: their vividness and their dangling. Every Chinese woman wears something that dangles."

"How do you know?" she interrupted him. "How do you know what Chinese *girls* wear?"

Sên King-lo laughed—his eyes even more than his mouth. Chinese gentlepeople have the most beautiful teeth in the world.

"No, no," he protested. "That was well-bowled. But you have not caught me out, leg before wicket. I

have seen pictures of Chinese girls, Miss Gilbert. And I can read Chinese. Stickpins and girdle ornaments dangle in half the pages of Chinese romances. You *did* remind me of my home—for the moment. Even the fern you were fanning yourself with added to the impression. You fanned yourself a little as we do—with a Chinese turn of your wrist. I am in your debt."

The girl made no reply beyond a chill, perfunctory smile. She was slightly amused, still more slightly interested, and not a little offended.

She turned and, finding a chance, spoke with the man on her other side.

After that the table talk became more general—as Miss Julia best liked it.

Much of it was talk well over Ivy Gilbert's head. She had heard of the League of Nations and she knew—superficially—what Bolshevism was, but she never had heard of Lombroso, or of the cave-temples of Ajanta. She did not know who Akbar and Barbur were. She did not know who "John Doe" was. Nor what Pragmatism meant. She never had heard of Knut Hamsun. She listened, not greatly interested, and she contributed nothing. And she was vexed that the only two men of any special note or maturity there directed a great deal of their conversation to Mr. Sên King-lo, and that the part he bore in all that was said seemed not only the least mean and quite the ablest, most interesting, but also the quickest and easiest. Certainly his use of English was the supplest there. A *Chinese* turn of her wrist indeed! She wondered if the odd, tan-colored creature was able to *think* in English? He spoke the language—hers and Shakespeare's—almost as if he must think in it. And he must have been speaking it for a good many years—his r's were not l's. There was more

a something Eastern in the timbre of his voice than anything distinctly a foreigner's in his accent. He spoke her own tongue more as she did, more as she'd usually heard it at home—though perhaps not invariably in Balham—as she always heard it in Washington, or heard it at Harvard or under the elms of New Haven, when she'd been there last summer for a few vivid international days.

There was no dancing after supper. There was chit-chat and music—out on the porch. They sang "Annie Laurie" and "Oft in the Stilly Night" and a fairly long program dictated by Miss Julia. Then she commanded Mr. Sên to play—and to sing that little song she'd liked so much the other night. But he had not brought an instrument—neither a lute nor his guitar. Ivy Gilbert's lip curled a little. So, he was a troubadour, too! He ought to have worn his lute, or a gilded, inlaid harp, to the garden party, slung over his shoulder on a ribbon. She wondered if he could use his fists! Those delicate, graceful hands did not look as if they'd be much good at fisticuffs!

"You are not to come without it again," Miss Julia told him.

"When I call on Sunday mornings, or meet you at the Wardman Park Inn for lunch, Madame?"

"You know what and when I mean," Miss Julia told him severely. "Go and get a banjo—or something."

Sên King-lo rose instantly. " 'In all my best I shall obey you, Madame,' " he said with a low and humble bow, and went off towards the "quarters" beyond the kitchen-garden.

Did Miss Townsend lunch with a Chinese at the Wardman? Ivy wondered. Did many women do so?

How—how extraordinary! But it was rather sporting of Miss Julia.

Sên came back presently from beyond the tomatoes and the cucumbers, walking briskly, tuning a banjo as he came.

He sat down on the veranda steps, at Miss Julia's feet, and began thrumming an old camp-meeting song. Ivy Gilbert thought the words preposterous, but the lilt was very pretty—and Miss Julia beat time softly on the porch railing with her tortoise-shell lorgnette—and Miss Julia joined in the chorus. Every one did—except Ivy Gilbert. He sang "My Old Dutch"—Ivy knew that; and he sang a darky love-song. How could *he* do that? Then he started Harry Lauder's London latest. And the English girl, who never had heard of China's Yellow Sorrow or of Omi or of Marco Polo, had heard of Harry Lauder.

Miss Julia hinted deftly at "goodnight" with, "And now the best for the last. One of your own!"

Sên King-lo made the borrowed banjo wail like a soft wind that grieved and trembled in the moonlight—and then drifted words into the accompaniment that the girl fancied he was improvising.

"There is some one of whom I keep a-thinking;
There is some one whom I visit in my dreams,
Though a hundred hills stand sentinel between us,
And the dark rage of a hundred sunless streams.
For the same bright moon is kind to us,
And the same untrammeled wind to us,
Daring a hundred hills,
Whispers the word that thrills.
And the dust of my heart, laid bare,
Shows the lilies that linger there,"

he sang.

And then the good-bys were said. And Miss Julia and Ivy Gilbert were left alone.

Sên King-lo lingered over Miss Townsend's hand. Ivy feared he was going to offer to touch hers. But he did not, he merely bowed, and without speaking.

The girl was grateful for that.

She stood a moment at her window, looking at the roses in the moonlight, before she drew her curtain and began to undress. And, as she stood looking out across the garden, she drew the scarlet peppers from her bodice and threw them, testily, out into the night.

CHAPTER V

AS they sat at breakfast—Miss Julia and the girl—Lysander brought his mistress, and proffered on a great silver salver, a florist's ribbon-bound box. There were carnations in it, great dusky, imperial, wine-deep carnations, ruby red ones, flaming scarlet, blush pink and lemon, and a handful just the color of tomatoes. Julia Townsend gathered them up in her hands with a murmur of delight—as many of them as her hands could hold, and hung her pleased face over their sumptuous fragrance.

"I never give a friend's gift away—or any part of it," she said, "or you should have half of these. They belong to youth," she added a little sadly—but quite bravely. "But you shall smell them."

The girl could not help smelling them. They scented the room.

Miss Julia took the visiting-card from the box as if she knew whose it would prove, read it with a smile, and passed it—as if proud of it—to Ivy.

Beneath his engraved name, on the bit of social pasteboard, as correct in Western convention as his coat, Sên King-lo had written, "With gratitude for rice, and always to you, Madame, with my homage."

Ivy Gilbert looked at the card, passed it back—scarcely touching it—looked at the flowers, then looked at Miss Julia, trying to think of some pleasant and satisfactory comment to make—she thought one was expected—failed, and so "Thank you," lamely, was all she said.

Miss Townsend was simple in the best and finest sense of simplicity, but what she knew she knew rather thoroughly, and she was not inexperienced in girls.

"Why do you not like Mr. Sên?" she asked.

"I've not said so." Ivy flushed a little.

"I say so," Miss Julia retorted with gentle decision.

"But," the girl demurred, "I'm not sure that I don't."

"You are not sure that you do," the woman insinuated with a smile.

"That is perfectly true," the girl owned. "I don't know whether I like or dislike him. I hope I did neither. I'd not care to believe that I either liked or disliked him."

"Why not, girl?"

"I'm not sure I can explain. I—yes, that is it; I resented him."

"Resented him?" Miss Julia spoke warmly. "Why?"

"His color, I suppose," Ivy said hesitatingly. "For I can't think of any other reason. I don't feel as you do, Miss Townsend, about colored people and all that—we don't in England. But still—I don't quite take it lying down, I suppose, when I see one of them, not only evidently thinking himself as good as we are, but assuming that we think so too."

"Sên King-lo is very much better than most of *us*," Miss Townsend said quietly, "and far too intelligent not to know it."

The girl stared in astonishment. She was wordless.

The woman laughed. "Don't be a goose, Ivy," she advised good-humoredly. "And don't talk about 'colored people' as if Mr. Sên were one. He is nothing of the sort."

"He is blacker than I am," Ivy laughed.

"Well, how would you like to be called a 'colored person'?"

"But I'm not. And calling me so wouldn't make me one."

"And he is not one. And calling him so doesn't make him one."

"He's Chinese," Ivy persisted.

"Who said he wasn't?" Miss Julia persisted too. "And—if I get at your meaning, and I think I do—you think it inappropriate that you should associate with a Chinese gentleman on just the same terms as with a French or Spanish gentleman. Isn't that it?"

"There *is* a difference," Ivy urged.

"Humph!" said Miss Julia.

"I don't think Uncle Lysander liked waiting on him," the girl ventured.

"Indeed?" Miss Townsend spoke crisply. "I give my blacks their orders. I am not concerned with their race-prejudices, or disturbed by their likes or dislikes—so long as they do not display them. And it never has occurred to me to consult Lysander as to what guests I should or should not receive."

"Don't be angry with me, please," Ivy pleaded. "I only said what I did because you asked me."

"That's true," the hostess admitted promptly. "And

I daresay you are not the only one that is surprised and not too approving of my friendship with Sên King-lo."

"Oh, I hope I didn't even hint that!"

"You didn't mean to, I'm sure. But you felt it. And," she added dryly, "you did rather hint that my Chinese guest was not good enough for Uncle Lysander."

"Oh—" Ivy began—and broke off lamely with, "I wish I'd held my tongue."

"I don't," Miss Julia told her. "We may as well get it clear. There are two parts to it: the very different attitude of my mind to the darkies and to Asiatics, and my personal regard for Mr. Sên individually. I love my negroes, just as I love my dogs and all horses. In a certain way, or rather in certain ways, I respect them—sometimes, some of them. I respect their loyalty, when they are loyal. (Mine have to be, or go.) But the best of them are a cross between babies and useful domestic animals. The negro race has no past, and will have no future. It has certain knacks of mind, but no intellect. It is of peasant breed through and through. Lysander and Peter probably would be eating each other, or breakfasting off Dinah this very day, and doing it stark naked somewhere in Africa, if their ancestors had not been captured, carried over here, and sold as slaves to my ancestors. The nigger rose to his highest place and development under the rule of the Southern master. What's going to happen to him now? One of three things. Either he'll die out, starved to death by his own laziness and exterminated by consumption; or he'll deteriorate into a despised and despicable, contemptibly employed pariah, crushed and wretched, his hand against every one of us, and most of all against himself; or he'll ruin this country and exterminate *us*. He can teach us nothing and the North-fangled teaching is going to cor-

rupt him and corrupt him very far and very fast. It isn't a matter of skin, I tell you, it isn't a matter of color; it is a matter of character, of mind and of social fitness —the difference between the negroes and the Asian. Asia can teach us a great deal. And some of us are just beginning to suspect it. Sên King-lo's ancestors were *gentlemen*, and were scholars and statesmen and artists when yours and *mine* were living in a tadpole state of human existence. We have risen — you and I. The darkies can't rise—not an inch higher than they have. We never—if we've got a sane hair on our head—can treat the negroes as our equals; for the reason that they never by any possibility or miracle can rise to or approach equality. They can go down, in my opinion they will—but they never, never can go up—any farther. Many Asiatic peoples had 'gone up' very far when we were still wallowing. Not many of us Americans know this—or are willing to realize it. I happen to. They are *different* from us. They are *not* inferior. Now, about Mr. Sên—individually about him. When he first came here the present running after yellow officials had not begun. It is only a smart-set fad—like the tango and indecently short skirts, or a dash of rum in tea—to spoil it—we had that a few years ago, or eating asparagus with your fingers. It's only froth—and not the creditable thing it looks. No one ran after him then, or asked him to dinner. I had to. To be fair, I didn't like it. But I was in debt to him, and, of course, I had to pay."

Ivy was interested now—and looked it.

"His grandfather saved my great-uncle Julian's life. Yes!"—for the girl's amazement showed her almost incredulous. "In Pekin. What my great-uncle was doing there I don't remember—something about some sort of

concession somebody wanted about something or other —opium, I daresay, or tea, or tea-pots, or ivories, or hemp—anyway, he was there. And you English were there too—and not popular—and the Chinese didn't see any more difference between a nice simon pure American like my great-uncle Julian and an Englishman than some people can see between a woolly negro house-servant and a Chinese gentleman. Two of the English got themselves into a bad scrape of some sort; the Chinese locked them up in a cage, and fed them through the bars, and didn't feed them particularly well or particularly much—two Englishmen named—let me see—Lord? No—Lock—Lock and Parkes—yes, that's it; at least I think one was named Lock, and I know the other man's name was Parkes. Well, the Chinese were going to do the same to my great-uncle, and to cut off his head into the bargain. I'm sure I don't remember why, if I ever heard. And they very nearly did. But a Chinese man—you needn't ask me why, for I've no idea, helped Uncle Julian to escape, and sent him home to Virginia. His name was Sên—Sên Ch'ang Tso, and his memory has been kept green by all of us—we Townsends—ever since. And when I saw in the *Post* that a Mr. Sên had come over as a secretary or something to the Chinese Minister here I went and called. They were not going to let me in—but they did. The boy—Sên King-lo, was surprised at my visit. Well, that didn't matter. He was polite—they always are—and I sat down and asked him if he had had a relative in Pekin in 1860, a relative named Sên Ch'ang Tso, and he said, 'Yes, my grandfather.' And then I told him about my great-uncle Julian. He never had heard of that. But he said he was pleased to have met me—and I think he was—afterwards. And we have been friends ever since. I asked him here, because I felt I

ought to—but now I ask him because I want him. He had no other friend—outside of his own people—in Washington then. Now he has more than he can do with. But he never forgets me. He never lets many days go by without showing me one of the small, pretty attentions that mean so much to women, and mean most to old, unmarried women who can't be said to get the lion's share of carnations and chocolate creams." She sniffed at the flowers again, and nodded at Ivy across them.

"Thank you—for telling me," the girl said.

"Well, what is it? You are thinking something you don't like to say. Out with it, my dear."

"I was wondering," Ivy said slowly, "that Mr. Sên cared to sing darky songs, and wondering if he quite liked borrowing one of the negroes' banjos, and playing on it?"

Miss Julia laughed. "That color question again! Don't let how that affects Sên King-lo trouble you. It does not affect him at all. He may or may not realize that a good many people class him and all his countrymen with the blacks—probably he does. He can see through a church door when it is open. But, if he does, he leaves it for what it is worth. Sên King-lo knows what he *is*."

CHAPTER VI

AND Ivy tried to look convinced, and to do it cordially. She loved Miss Julia. She was not convinced, not even greatly impressed or interested. The ramifications of the color-question — if it had any, that seemed to obsess so much of worried Ameri-

can thought, and monopolized so much of American conversation, did not grip her. The color-question shadowed Europe but lightly as yet. And Ivy Gilbert was self-centered, and did not have a profound mind. At home she rarely read the *Times,* and never the *Spectator, Outlook* or *National Review.* And what if, some time long ago, in the far-off outlandish place where cherry-stones grow outside of the fruit, and even the King—or was he the Emperor?—or the Lama?—dined off puppies and mice, and drowned his wives in hot oil if they displeased him, a man named Sên *had* saved the life of one of the Townsends?—*if he had,* how did it credit the Sên now in Washington? She could not see that it, even if true, put the Chinese man she'd met at Miss Julia's on her own plane, or on one at all approaching it—or that anything ever could or should. But she loved Miss Julia and would not hurt or vex her for a great deal. So she did her girlish best to look what she did not feel.

And Miss Julia appreciated it. She was not deceived. But she was pleased at the girl's loyal docility and deference. And what did it matter what the raw, not-much-traveled young thing thought of Sên King-lo? Nothing at all. So Miss Julia smiled affectionately at her girl-guest, as she pushed back her chair and said,

"And now, child, if you won't have just one more pop-over, we'll go and cut the roses—after I've put these beauties in water."

And two hours later, Ivy Gilbert, her arms full of roses, went back to Washington and her nursery-governess duties in her cousin's—Lady Snow's—house in Massachusetts Avenue, and Miss Julia was left alone to put all the fat, heavily-embossed silver, the pearl-handled knives, the precious heirloom glass, and the very thin

china back in their wrappings of chamois-leather and lavender.

It was Friday. The garden party at Rosehill had been on a Thursday. On Saturday morning a small thing befell that had not often happened to Ivy Gilbert, and very rarely indeed since she had left England: a man sent her flowers.

Ivy was surprised when a maid brought her the box, dubious even—and she scrutinized the name and address very carefully. But there was no loophole of blunder in either. So she untied the silk cord, and lifted the lid. Violets smiled up at her shyly and fragrantly—and whoever had sent them had had the taste to send them with an abundance of their own leaves—and nothing else—but perhaps that good taste had been the florist's.

She picked up the card with them and looked at it with curiosity. Then dropped it back with a little sound of disappointment.

The card was Mr. Sên King-lo's. But nothing was written on it—nothing beyond the engraved name.

She was not a little incensed. She felt that he had taken an unpardonable liberty. It would be taking too much notice of him and of his insufferable Chinese cheek, to send the violets back. But she would not have them!

She'd give them to Emily, the under-housemaid. It was Emily's night out, and no doubt Emily'd be well-pleased to wear them. Then—she thought of Miss Julia. Miss Julia valued the man, had said she was fond of him! And she had met him at Miss Julia's. No, she mustn't do that, much as she'd like to. And they were beautiful violets—dewy and sweet. Well, they should have a drink for their own sake—the fault wasn't theirs—and for dear, foolish Miss Julia's.

The card and the tissue paper went into the waste-

paper basket, but the presumptuously sent violets went into a bowl of fresh water. And Ivy carried it up to her own room and left them there, for fear one of her cousins should ask her who sent them. She'd have been ashamed to tell. So the violets were more or less tucked away in an inconspicuous corner of the English girl's room. And before lunch she had forgotten all about them in the rush of the day. Saturday always was her busiest day. Lady Snow made shopping rounds on Saturday mornings, and social rounds on Saturday afternoons, almost invariably, and household responsibilities devolved on Ivy, in her cousin's absence, that the British matron never deputed when she was at home.

But today Ivy had visitors who would not be denied, but refused to be barred out by the man-servant's "Not at home"—and when Ivy couldn't come down, insisted upon going up to her. And Ivy alone in the schoolroom at the top of the house was almost as little pleased to see them as she had been to see "that Chinaman's" violets—but not so surprised. Lucille Smith had a habit of "popping in" at unusual and inconvenient hours, and never on earth had been known to take "No" for an answer. And Molly Wheeler had "come along" with the Judge's daughter.

"I'll have to go on working," Ivy told them. "I can't go to church in the morning unless I get this blouse finished. I've nothing else I can possibly wear with my new coat and skirt—and no other gown fit to wear. And I must go to church with the children. It's one of my charming duties. They wriggle and whisper all the time. So I must get this done, and it will take me all my time. So don't expect me to entertain you."

"That's all right," Miss Smith assured her. "Where

are the treasures?'' she asked anxiously, looking about the small room apprehensively.

It was evident that they had not come to call upon either Dick or Blanche, and it was quite as evident that both the girls were greatly excited. Perhaps Lucille was going to marry George Hitchock after all, then.

''Gone to dancing-school with Justine, thank fortune,'' their governess answered, ''or I never *should* get this finished. I'll have to sew half the night as it is. Thank goodness they won't be back for another hour or more.''

''Thank the Lord!'' Lucille Smith cried fervently. ''Ivy! Is it *true?*''

''True? What?''

''Did Sên King-lo send you flowers?''

Miss Gilbert in her surprise nearly let the new delicate blouse fall upon the schoolroom floor.

''Who ever told you that?'' she demanded.

''Nobody. I heard him myself, heard him order them. I'm almost sure it was your name he gave, you he told the man to send them to. Tom went to talk up Belle's wedding bouquet—she's got such a temper, you know, there'd be the devil to pay—right in the church, perhaps—if it wasn't just exactly as she told Tom to have it made, so he didn't dare order it over the 'phone or by writing, and he was no end embarrassed, plumb afraid to go alone—so I had to tag along. Well, when Sên King-lo came in, I was mighty glad I had. Say! he knew what he wanted, just how many, just which sort, and about the leaves, and the box; he picked out the box, just a plain white one, 'nothing fancy,' and no ribbons. I hoped he'd stop and talk a bit, but he only took off his hat and kept it off—My! isn't his hair smooth—and Tom was so fidgety I couldn't make the running myself. If I hadn't held on to his coat, he'd

have bolted and cut out of the store. But I did hear Sên King-lo order violets, and I'll believe to my dying day it was *you* he told the clerk to send them to. Was it? Ivy Gilbert, did Sên King-lo send you violets? Tell us this minute!"

"Is that what brought you here?" asked Ivy.

"You bet it is!" Lucille exclaimed. And Molly added, "And you can bet big!"

"Did he?" Lucille begged. "Ivy, did he?"

"Yes, he did," Ivy said chillingly.

"Oh!" Lucille cried. "Ivy—how perfectly scrumptious! How heavenly!"

And the Senator's daughter said chokingly, "You lucky, lucky girl!"

Ivy regarded them gravely. "I think it rather an insult," she said smoothly.

"Oh!" both the other girls cried. And Lucille Smith added, "Say, Ivy Gilbert, are you insane? Sên King-lo never sent flowers before! Violets from Sên King-lo! And you—" words failed.

Miss Gilbert smiled superiorly. "You are very much mistaken, Lucille. He often sends flowers to Miss Julia. He sent her a huge armful yesterday morning. I was there when they came. Mine are just a handful."

"Miss Julia!" Molly retorted. "Of course he does. We knew that. She always tells you when she has flowers he's sent in the parlor, and everybody knows he adores Miss Julia, and that she thinks no end of him. Why, she discovered him, and mothered him too, a year or more before he became the rage. Miss Julia don't count. And I think he often sends flowers to married women after he's been to dinner or a dance—he is no end polite—Sên King-lo. But he never, never sent any to a girl

before! Ivy, you are the very first. My—don't I wish it was me!"

"There isn't a girl in Washington who wouldn't," Lucille added.

Ivy Gilbert snapped off her thread, and laid down her needlework for a moment. "Lucille," she asked quietly, "would you marry Mr. Sên?"

Lucille giggled. "I'd like to—just to see Papa's face. But I don't say as I would, not exactly. You don't have to marry every man that sends you *marrons glacés,* or orchids, or I'd have as many husbands as the late Brigham Young had wives."

"Lucille Smith!" Miss Wheeler assumed a shockedness she did not feel.

"Well—isn't it true? And wouldn't most of us?"

"Yes, I suppose it is," Molly owned, dimpling happily.

"I don't say I would," Lucille repeated. "But goodness only knows what I'd say if he asked me. My, what a lark it would be! But I needn't worry. He won't ask me. He won't ask any of us. But, Ivy Gilbert, I don't believe but half the girls in Washington would jump at the chance."

Ivy's lip curled. She took up her blouse and rethreaded her needle.

"I don't believe I would really. But it would be supremely exciting to have him ask me. And I'd give my eyes to have a flirtation with Sên King-lo. No girl ever has—and a good few dozens have tried."

Ivy sewed on in silence.

"Show them to us, do, Ivy," Molly broke in.

"Too much fag," the girl replied. "I haven't the time."

"Was there a note with them?" Lucille Smith questioned.

"There was not."

"Ivy," Molly begged, "tell us. . . . What did you say when you thanked him?"

"I have not seen him."

"But when you wrote?"

"I haven't."

"Oh! Oh!" Molly bleated it.

"Ivy Gilbert!" Lucille's was a cry of reproach.

"You must!" one of them told her.

"You awful goose!" the other told her.

"Did he send his card?"

Ivy nodded.

"Let's see it!" Miss Smith demanded.

"I haven't got it."

"Whatever!"

"Ivy!"

"Why should I keep it? I didn't want it. And our wastepaper baskets are emptied twice a day. It's one of the things Emma's most particular about."

Lucille gasped. Molly Wheeler looked on the point of weeping. "Weren't you glad to get the violets?" she wailed.

"I certainly was not. I was displeased," the sewing girl said coldly.

"You idiot! Come on, Molly; she's hopeless. Let's get on to Kate's."

"Yes, do," Ivy said cheerfully. "I *must* get this done. And I simply can't while you girls chatter, and sigh, and 'Oh!' and 'Ah!' "

"You might let us see them first," was Lucille's final shot.

Ivy made no reply. She sewed on quietly and busily

when they really had gone. But on the whole she felt less affronted by Mr. Sên than she had. And she wondered if she ought not, in common politeness, to send him a line of thanks—formal thanks.

The girls had envied her: that was clear.

If further acquaintance was Sên King-lo's desire, Miss Smith and Miss Wheeler had done more to accomplish his wish than Miss Julia had.

CHAPTER VII

IF Sên King-lo had such a desire, he was scarcely aware of it. And a Chinese usually knows perfectly what all his own wishes are. There is very little that floats; most is securely fixed in Chinese mentality and character.

He had liked her at Miss Julia's supper table, and on the porch after supper, better than she had liked him, but she had interested him less than he had interested her. In the garden, under the live-oaks she had arrested his attention intensely. At the supper table probing, not impertinently or even intentionally, but just as we must probe any stranger with whom we speak for the first time—unless character and personality mean nothing to us, and to Sên King-lo they meant a very great deal—he had found little to hold him; nothing but pleasant girlhood and a touch of bitterness that, while he pitied it, did not attract him. In the garden she had charmed him and simply and solely because, as he had told her, she for a moment had looked to him less un-Chinese, or, to coin a fitter word, less dis-Chinese than any not Oriental woman had before, or than he'd have credited that any could. She, the tilt of her head, her coloring, a look in her eyes, the movement of her fine,

blue-veined wrist, the jade-green of her straight-cut gown, the scarlet peppers dangling charm-like at her breast, the fan-used fern-frond, had made a sudden picture of home to him. And Sên King-lo was homesick —sometimes very homesick. And if she had looked to him a little Chinese-like, and he had been grateful to her for that, what he'd by chance heard her say had quickened his admiration as no mere beauty of person could have done — and Sên King-lo worshiped beauty. In that he was true to type. Chinese religions are somewhat a farce, a convention and not a force, but the Chinese strictly speaking religionless, are intensely and vitally religious, and they worship but two gods: ancestors and beauty. The technical gods of China are among its servants—hewers of wood, drawers of water —engaged often by the year or the day, treated and paid accordingly, punished when recalcitrant or slothful, dismissed without a character if too unsatisfactory. All of which the gods take lying down, and far more like unto lambs than Chinese servants do, who often make the welkin ring with their wailing and cursing.

When Ivy Gilbert had inveighed against kissing and being kissed she had spoken straight to the soul (and the taste) of China, and the Chinese soul of Sên King-lo had sprung to her in response. Sên King-lo was no yellow-tinted "plaster saint." But our Western habit of kissing, meaninglessly and otherwise, revolted him as much today as it had when his astonishment and disgust first had observed it. And he had avoided it—always. Girls, and here and there a wife, here in America, across the Atlantic, in several capitals—well, Sên King-lo knew that he might have kissed, if he would. A girl who stayed away from a presumably pleasant gaiety rather than receive a young hostess' friendly kiss had intrigued

him. And that charm and approval held when he had found less than he'd hoped in the girl at supper, and still held. But if she had interested him less than he her, she had not altogether failed to interest him, and he had liked her.

He had sent his violets (they'd cost a fraction of what Miss Julia's carnations had) with far less thought of further acquaintance than of gratitude for the picture she'd made—she and her gown and peppers and fan of fern. For that and for one other reason. Because of the picture she'd made, and because her name was "Ivy." He'd heard her called so—and it had made an oddly strong appeal to him—a Chinese appeal.

He had bought and sent the little offering of fragrant flowers not from any light or sudden impulse — Sên King-lo very rarely acted on impulse—but in quiet acknowledgment of a debt; and because her name was Ivy! Not very usual reasons for the sending of flowers —but then Sên King-lo was Chinese.

In one thing Lucille had gossiped truly enough. Sên King-lo never had sent flowers to a girl before. And he had done it this time without either intention or any flicker of warmth. Just possibly the call of her youth to his had sent its young, quick message through more than he realized. Twenty-seven is not omniscient—not even twenty-seven of the quicker sense and Chinese born. He had known no "girls" of his own race. The many he'd known of the American and, but more slightly, half a dozen European races, had sent no message along the nerve wires of his personality, partly because they had both looked and seemed to him so utterly foreign, and because they had not seemed to him altogether girl-like. Miss Gilbert had had a hint of familiar look to him; she had said a Chinese-like thing—the first thing

he'd heard her say—and if afterwards, she had not whipped his mind into foam and excitement, he had thought her maidenly.

He had thought and sensed her maidenly. He was twenty-seven. And he was a man.

And perhaps for this—certainly for something else—his face warmed when the English girl's note of thanks—the merest, meaningless line—came to him on Monday.

Before he read it he saw how much he liked this girl's writing. No other people take handwriting so seriously as the Chinese do—put so much into it, read so much from it. This was round, clear writing, individual and decided; nothing Spencerian about it—as refreshing as a cup of cold well-water on a very hot day—in a country where almost all handwritings were disconcertingly, monotonously alike. It was an attractive handwriting, and he thought it looked like its writer. It pleased him. But it was something else that brought a soft flush to his face, a new look in his eyes.

She had signed it in full:

"Sincerely,

"Ivy Ruby Gilbert."

"Ivy *Ruby!* How strange!" he said under his breath. And he stood for a time at the window looking out at the opposite house, and not seeing it. Seeing a homestead in China where the hollyhocks and persimmons that crowded about it were almost as gay as the roof of his birthplace, where the flamingoes filched coolness from the tiny streamlet where the trout were pinkest and sweetest—perhaps because of the tang of the citron and lemon trees that hung over it, and the musk and mint and verbena that clothed its banks, and the violets his mother had loved best of all flowers grew in their delicate

millions—his girl-mother whom he had never seen, his mother, at whose grave his father had worshiped until he'd gone to her "on high," his mother who had died that his life might come: a service of motherhood that gives a saintship of its own in China, where mothers not so set apart are loved by sons as mothers are nowhere else—a service that lays on a Chinese son a double duty and joy—and, too, sorrow—of worship and remembrance. His mother had been fifteen at his birth and her death. And her "milk-name," the name her husband always had called her, and called her in his sleep till he went to her, was "Ruby."

CHAPTER VIII

IVY GILBERT had a far happier lot than a nursery governess can count on. But even so she was not quite as happy as it's good for a girl to be, and not nearly as happy as she'd have wished to be. There were two things she greatly craved: personal happiness and travel—travel actual and social, to go far off the beaten paths, to see new, out-of-the-way places, to have new, uncommon experiences, She longed for both all the more and the more persistently because she thought there was very little chance that either ever would come to her.

She was actively unhappy, when she was, because she had so little to spend on clothes—it sounds raw and rough put so, but it is put truly—because she had fewer "good times" than most of the girls she knew, and (perhaps most of all) because she loathed the, in itself easy, work she had to do. No work is easy that

we both dislike and must do. Ivy Gilbert was a very inefficient and a very discontented nursery governess.

In that good-natured society neither her comparative poverty nor her wage-earning in any way debarred her from such social place and power as a girl may have. And in America a girl may have much of both.

Washington is an *omnium gatherum.* All conditions of men and women, of all ages and of most sorts and most races circle about the White House. But it has its select set—the word "select" is its own, and need not be analyzed too closely. Ivy had its *entrée.* To the superficial few in it, who cared for and gaged such things in the wrong way, her undoubted relation to the British peerage "cut far more ice" than did the fact that she worked—or was assumed to—for her living; and that she lived with Sir Charles and Lady Snow and called them "Charlie" and "Emma" threw a very becoming garniture of ermine over her simple and not always very new gowns.

To do the girl's own common sense and practical intelligence but scant justice, it was not the fact that she worked for a wage that was, she thought, her cramping detriment, but the shabby fact that she could not dress on anything approaching a parity with the girls who were her companions and friends. It was that that galled her. And she did feel that there was some ignominy in the small drudgery-way in which she earned her living. A people who boasted Emma Eames and cringed to Hetty Green could not consistently look too coldly on a girl who earned her living in a superior, if small, way; especially when every one knew that Lady Snow's cousin, Miss Gilbert, could be presented at the Court of St. James any time she liked, if she were in England and had the price (or credit) of the train

and feathers. And Ivy knew it. But she despised her own line of thrift—if others did not—perhaps a little because she followed it so lamely and sourly. Discontent often breeds shame. The English girl had been kindly treated by kindly Washington—handsomely treated, even, but she always had felt an outsider.

At home—in London—her own birth and environment had perched her more or less on a social fence. And in Washington her dress-skimp kept her so—at least in her own opinion.

Ivy's maternal grandmother had been the daughter of an earl's younger son. Ivy's father had been a not too successful tutor at one of the great public schools. An uncle of hers was a bishop—Canterbury itself not too remote a possibility—another uncle was a wealthy cheesemonger; a third a briefless barrister. A cousin of her father's was a bank manager in Surrey, a cousin of her mother's owned and ran a rural inn, and his son a fashionable seaside hotel. She had a score of aristocratic living kindred, and others that belonged to the lowest middle-class, a few that were frankly "trade" —and retail trade at that. Her childhood had been radiant, her girlhood anxious. Mrs. Gilbert had been a woman of extraordinary ability, as had her elder sister, Mrs. Snow. While Ivy's mother lived the wolf that yapped now and then not far from their door never got nose or paw in. Cora Gilbert could make a delectable *entrée* out of a bone and a bunch of herbs, a chic hat out of a yard or two of re-dyed ribbon and a card of safety pins; and she ruled her husband and ruled him well—and always she had a laugh, a smile and a gay, tender word for her man and child, and a handsome serviceable umbrella ready and waiting for the rainy day. But the mother died when the only child was

scarcely fourteen; and then slowly but surely the wolf pushed in. George Gilbert was devoted and industrious, a rarely delightful companion—but he lacked the sense of proportion, was devoid of executive ability, had no mastery of detail, and he had one crass selfishness, one incurable vice. He lusted for books as its victim lusts for dope. There was not a second-hand bookshop in Westminster or Bloomsbury that did not know and welcome him. And before Ivy was sixteen more than one pawnbroker knew him well. He never borrowed, he never begged, above all he never grumbled or cringed. But he would buy books, new books and old books, big books and little, cheap and dear. And not with one would he ever part. They crowded the little home from half-basement to attic—and at his death, when Ivy was twenty, their sale at a shilling-a-volume average brought her more than nine-tenths of her heritage and the first really good gown she'd bought in six years. And though she had loved her father both tenderly and ardently, so aggrievedly had the girl resented the absence of joints and frocks for which their cost might have paid, that she grudged the sale of none of them and had kept for remembrance only three or four that he had prized most; and she had kept even them altogether out of a sense of filial duty and not in the least because she had cared to keep them.

In England she had never lacked for invitations and cordial welcome. But what's the pleasure in that to a dress-fond girl who has next to nothing to wear? And Ivy Gilbert found more rasp than joy in favors and entertainment she could in no way return. Her rich and artistocratic relatives one and all liked her, courted her even. Her charming, dainty ways; her quick, if not deep wit; her radiant face; her exquisite voice, more than

paid her way—if only she could have realized it—but she did not. Several of her richer kinswomen banded together to give the girl a good time—two of them offered her gifts of gowns and ornaments—and one of them, her godmother, and a spinster, gladly would have "dressed" and "presented" her. The good times she accepted now and then, but the gifts she would not have. Riding lessons, a very good saddle-horse and its keep, she could not resist when her godmother presented them on her fifteenth birthday; but that was the only breach that generous, affectionate Lady Kate ever was able to make in the girl's pride. Pin money and chiffons, old or new, Ivy would have none. She had inherited her father's adamant honesty. She loathed going without, but she would not sponge.

Friends and relatives of lesser purse and rank reached out towards her kindness and welcome as ready and cordial. But their simpler lives and homes attracted her weakly. From some old-time ancestor—perhaps one whose name she had never heard—Ivy had inherited an inordinate pride of race, an affinity with luxury and ease. Mayfair seemed to her home; Balham and West Kensington did not. Her own equivocal social place, the mixture of gentle and nobody in her veins, tried her sadly. She thought of herself bitterly as a sort of social mongrel. And she blamed and despised the grandmother who had refused a duke and married an architect of minor ability, less success and humble birth. The little leasehold home in which her father had died—safely settled on his wife at his wife's own provident suggestion—became Ivy's absolute property. She sold it at once. It little more than sufficed to pay outstanding and funeral accounts. Fifty odd pounds, a handful of trinkets, a shabby assortment of clothes she disliked, and

her father's absurd assortment of books, were all that she had in the world.

But she had no lack of friends—sincere and eager-to-prove-it friends. Several homes were offered her, and, incidentally, two not quite desperately ineligible husbands. She refused them all, and set her wits to work as to how they and she were to earn their living and hers. And Charles Snow—her mother's sister's son—and Emma his wife put their heads together to outwit Ivy's. And where others, as ready but less skilful to befriend, failed the Snows succeeded—measurably.

They offered her a three years' (and probably more) engagement in Washington and two hundred pounds a year. Ivy mocked and accepted. But she insisted upon naming her own wage—and from that determination nothing would budge her. "You shall pay me one hundred a year," she told her cousin Charles, "and that is about three hundred more than I'll be worth. I can't dress, as a member of Emma's family must be dressed, on a penny less; so you shall give me five fivers four times a year. I shan't teach the children anything, of course—but they'll be none the worse for that for a year or two. But I can mend and make for them—all but their smartest things, see that their faces are washed, keep them from falling into the fire or out of the windows, and, just perhaps, be useful to Emma now and then, and give you the pleasure of keeping me out of the wind and the rain. It's good of you, Charles, and it's more than good of Emma. And I won't slap them—though I shall want to every day of my life. When do we start?"

They sailed in less than a month. The three years were more than half gone now, but none of them considered it a possibility that she ever would leave them

except to go to a home of her own. Lady Snow hoped and planned that Ivy would marry, and Ivy herself frankly hoped so also. But as yet it had not been indicated to whom. She did her best to earn her hundred a year, and she had succeeded better than she knew: for both husband and wife had found her presence a help and a pleasure. She did indeed teach Blanche and Dick very little, and good-natured Emma rarely would let her do any needlework for them; but she kept them English, and she did both her cousins the hundred services that a younger sister might have done. She loved them both and she earned the love they both gave her. She shared Lady Snow's pleasures, as far as a dress allowance of a hundred pounds a year enabled her to do without too stinging a flaunt of poverty. But five hundred dollars and an inherited deftness of eyes, fingers and taste did not go far towards adequate dressing in Washington's smartest set. And she felt herself a godmotherless, pumpkinless Cinderella; and she loathed it by day—and dreamed by night of—glass slippers.

Lady Snow would have "loved" to dress her young cousin; but did not dare even suggest it.

Miss Townsend's warm friendship had been both a personal boon and a social asset to the not-too-contented English girl. It stood for a great deal in Washington. The half-aristocrat in the girl thrilled and was grateful to the entire aristocrat of the old Southern woman.

But it was not enough. She envied other girls—not what they were, but what they had—and, because of what they had, where they might untrammeled go, what they might untrammeled do. She realized how generously and gladly good her cousins were to her. But she felt that a degrading smirch of "service" clung to her, as the smirch of restricted means clung to her gar-

ments. "I Serve" was not Ivy Gilbert's motto, and —because of the plebeian strain in her veins—she had no sense that of all mottoes it is the highest and proudest. She felt her life dull. She was ripe for adventure.

Sên King-lo's violets had done more to reëstablish her in her own raw esteem than all Miss Julia Townsend's warm friendship. From resenting those innocent violets, she abruptly came to value them *because* two feather-headed girls with great purses at their service had so envied her them. Sên King-lo—a *Chinese*—had put her on her feet. Her attitude to him was not altered, not modified. But she was girlishly, if cheaply, elated to have what other girls wished for and schemed for and couldn't get. She did not place the violets more conspicuously in her room when she went down to it, it never occurred to her to tuck a few of them in her belt when she changed for dinner. But she threw them a kindlier glance as she tidied her hair. Perhaps she ought to say some sort of "thank you." And the next day, after church, she did. She wrote Mr. Sên a note. She wrote merely:

Dear Mr. Sên King-lo:

How kind of you to remember—with such violets—our meeting at Miss Townsend's. Thank you for them.

Yours sincerely,

I. R. Gilbert.

It looked wrong, she thought, as she scanned it. And after a little consideration she rewrote it—leaving out the word "Yours," and writing her Christian names in full. The initials had looked curt. One didn't say "Thank you" curtly—if one said it at all.

She posted the note herself when she took Blanche and Dick for their Sunday afternoon stroll.

She wondered if he'd reply to her note, and ask if he might call. She hoped not. But she'd not mind Lucille and Molly knowing it—if he did.

Sên King-lo did neither. She met him again at the Ludlows'. He did not ask her to dance—though he danced several times. She was sincerely grateful that he did not. But he sought her out, thanked her for her kindness in writing—and in accepting—his posy, and chatted on until a partner claimed her.

She noticed that Mr. Sên danced exceedingly well and that his evening clothes suited him.

CHAPTER IX

"CHARLIE," Lady Snow said to her husband, almost a month later at dinner, "I made a new acquaintance today at Mrs. Ransome's, and—I don't know what you'll say—I asked him to call."

"You usually do, don't you?" Sir Charles commented. "Why should I waste words over so invariable a habit, my dear?"

"I certainly like to know people—what else is there for me to do with you shut up all day over your silly papers?"

"I do not doubt you would find them so," Sir Charles admitted dryly.

"We both were lunching there. I found him interesting—different somehow from any one I know. My new acquaintance is a man, did I say?"

"Quite unnecessary—but you did."

Emma Snow laughed. She plumed herself on her "affairs," and lived in desperate hope that some day one of them would attract her husband's attention suf-

ficiently to wean him a little from his dense absorption in the "silly business" his country paid him to attend to—and incidentally had knighted him that he might do it the more effectively in a country that proclaimed its scorn of all such fictitious honors, but at the same time received them with very marked favor and attention.

Sir Charles went stolidly and attentively on with his very good dinner. His wife raised her eyebrows —and led trumps—at least she hoped that it would prove she had.

"A perfectly charming Chinaman, Charlie."

But Sir Charles neither dropped his knife nor spilled his claret.

"Most of them are," he told her. "This canvas-back is a great improvement on those we had last week. But the sauce needs a dash more cayenne and more than a dash more lemon."

"Do you like the Chinese?" Ivy asked him quickly.

"Very much," he replied. "Every one does who *knows* them. They're the salt of the Eastern earth."

"Have you known many Chinamen—well?" Reginald Hamilton asked his host a little superciliously.

"I lived ten years among them," Snow replied curtly. "I was sent to Pekin when they first let me pass my Civil Service Exam. And I wish they'd left me there. But after ten years—for my sins—they promoted me—to Geneva! Yes, I have known many Chinese—some of them fairly well. The more you know them, the better you like them: bound to. By the way, Emma, 'Chinese' is a better word, more descriptive, I think, and better taste than 'Chinaman.' There is one Chinese in Washington I very much want to get on easy terms with."

"To Scotland Yard special-branch him?" his wife quizzed him.

"Never mind that part," her husband retorted.

"Mr. Sên told me—" Lady Snow began, but she never finished her sentence.

"Was it Sên King-lo you met at Judge Ransome's?" her husband demanded, putting his glass down untasted. Emma Snow had aroused her husband's attention at last—very much so.

"Yes—it was," she announced importantly, "Mr. Sên King-lo. I asked him to call."

"Good!" said Sir Charles heartily. "I hope he does."

"Sure to. He promised," Emma Snow said confidently. Charles had not taken her small news as she'd intended him to, and had hoped that he would. But she was gratified at the mild excitement she'd caused. She'd hoped Charles would be annoyed—but, since he was not, it was the next best thing that he was pleased. It was his indifference that rankled—and indifference was his constant everyday wear.

"He'll leave his card—some day when he know's you're out," their guest observed. "It is one of his affectations. He's a bit of a jackanapes, if you ask me." No one had, or had thought of doing so. "And he usually does. It has gone to his chink head the way he's run after in Washington, D. C."

Sir Charles Snow crumbled his bread viciously, but he took no other notice, for Reginald de Courcy Seymour Hamilton *was* their guest—though what possessed Emma to tolerate the fellow, let alone invite him, was more than he could understand.

Lady Snow had her reasons. They were not ungenerous ones—and they were distinctly feminine.

"By the way, Ivy," she said, "you met Mr. Sên at Miss Townsend's, he told me."

"How did you like him, Miss Gilbert?" Hamilton spoke before the girl could answer her cousin.

"Miss Townsend likes him immensely," Ivy replied. "I have only met him twice—very casually."

"Cracked, isn't she?" Hamilton said pleasantly. "Haven't met her, though, myself."

"And are never likely to," Sir Charles and his cousin said promptly—to themselves.

"But, by George, he sent you flowers though, didn't he? I heard so. I'd forgotten that. Perhaps he will call when you are at home after all, Lady Snow. I'd live in hopes," Hamilton said in a tone that made Sir Charles Snow's right foot tingle. But Emma Snow had little attention to waste on any one but Ivy now.

"Sent you flowers, Ivy?" she cried excitedly. "You never told me. When?"

"I don't put *every* nothing in my diary," Ivy said indifferently, not troubling to lift her eyes from her plate.

"But did he?" Emma Snow insisted.

Her cousin smiled coldly. She was furious at Reginald Hamilton; she didn't know why.

"Did Mr. Sên send you flowers, Ivy?" Sir Charles asked.

The girl looked up then, looked at him in surprise. The question was unlike Charles Snow.

She had ignored Emma—had been on the point of saying, "Why not get any details you'd like from Mr. Hamilton? He seems particularly well informed." But she would not put her cousin Charles off, or answer him flippantly—she liked him far too well.

"Yes," she told Sir Charles, quietly. "Mr. Sên sent

me a handful of violets one day. They were beautiful violets."

"I wish I'd known that!" was Snow's astonishing comment.

"Whyever why?" his wife cried.

"Have you, as well as Japan, designs on Shantung, Charlie?" Ivy demanded, with a laugh into his eyes.

"Heaven help us!" the knight retorted. "Who'd have thought you'd ever heard of Shantung. I wouldn't for one. That *is* a development! Are you thinking of standing for Parliament, Ivy, when we go home? Or of investing in a Cook's ticket to the grave of Confucius?"

Sir Charles meant nothing by that, and Ivy Gilbert took nothing personal from it. Indeed, she did not know where Confucius was buried. A number of people in Christendom do not. And yet few bits of earth so small have wrought more of human history, human letters, human thought. And the centuries to come and the peoples of the future yet may veer and swing to that pivot, a crystal-tree-guarded grave in Kuifu.

Reginald Hamilton certainly did not know where the bones of the old Sage took their long rest. But he shot a look of impudent question at the English girl. She did not see it, fortunately; nor did Sir Charles. But Lady Snow did. And she wished they'd change the subject.

"I am not," Ivy told her cousin. "Neither. I teach your children geography!" she reminded him with nipping coldness.

"*Do you?*" he shot back at her. "You surprise me more and more. Emma," he turned to his wife and said, not jokingly, "I think, if I were you, I'd write Sên King-lo a note—see that you get his name right—

I'll show you how to write it—and ask him to dinner. I wish you would."

"Of course I will, dear." The wife was delighted. Charlie did not often back up her social activities, or much care who came to dinner or who did not, so long as his dinner was good and he was not expected to interrupt it with too much small talk, though he certainly preferred the did-nots to the dids. Lady Snow was very pleased.

Ivy Gilbert was not.

"I think," she said clearly, "I'd wait first, and see if Mr. Sên did call, Emma."

Husband and wife looked at her in blank surprise, and they crossed a question to each other's eyes. Never before had any one heard Ivy Gilbert veto any wish or command of her cousin Charles.

"He promised to call," Emma Snow said haltingly.

"Then he will call!" Sir Charles pronounced. "A Chinese word is the best bond on earth. I'd take it before A-1 at Lloyd's any day of the week."

Reginald Hamilton said nothing—though his big black-brown eyes sulked, and, to Lady Snow's relief, the subject did drop then.

Reginald de Courcy Seymour Hamilton sounds an English (not to say aristocratic) name—but it wasn't. At least its supporter was neither. He did not even hail from Boston or—to drop down the social and intellectual ladder very far—not even from New York. San Francisco could not claim him, and New Orleans would not have owned him. He had been born in Chicago and still ornamented that village-city of inordinate mixtures when he was at home. What he was doing in Washington nobody knew, unless he did, which was improbable—for no one had ever known him to do anything anywhere

except to take the very greatest care of his person and clothes, and to spend as much money as he could contrive to wrench from relatives—and others. He was very handsome; a little too plump, a little too smiling; but undeniably handsome, and his clothes were many, costly and very beautiful. He spoke with what he flattered himself (or perhaps one should say flattered it) was an English accent—when he remembered to do so—which was a matter of fits and starts, that made the prettiest patchwork of his speech. A sentence that started off with the broadest of *a's* often ended off with a few pronounced as the alphabet's first letter is in *rain* and in *bank*. No one had ever seen him without a flower in his coat—except at funerals—and oftenest it was an orchid. There was little harm in the fellow—unless intense love and over-valuation of self be evil. The worst thing about him was his parents. That is true of many of us. He hadn't a penny capital—of his own—but he had a sybarite income (though it fluctuated) and large prospects.

His father was a sensational Baptist clergyman who had made, and contrived to hold, a meteoric "hit" in Chicago. Chicago likes character—even pseudo-character. Of the latter the Rev. Joseph Hamilton had and to spare. There were Chicagoans who thought him an abomination, some who held him both a fraud and a nuisance, many who thought him a joke—and Chicago loves it joke. But his congregation adored him—more than perhaps men should a man—a congregation of shrewd business folk—wealthy, most of them, many of them with heads as hard as the shell of their adamant creed. To catch and *to keep* the affection and the respect of such men would seem an accomplishment of nothing less than genius. If that is true, Mr. Joseph Hamilton had a touch of genius—of a sort. He was as thin as Reginald de

Courcy Seymour promised to be plump. His voice was as sharp and hard as Reggie's was soft and creamy. His delivery was wonderful—more "dramatic" than would have been tolerated on the Surrey side of the London stage. He fancied his sermons. And those who carped at their quality could not gainsay their quantity. He fancied his "letters" even more. His people gloated over both. Old men who had burned and shivered over night at his diatribes, went downstairs in their pyjamas (or more old-fashioned sleeping raiment) on Monday morning to snatch the *Times, Inter-Ocean* or *Tribune* before any one else could, and to reread the wonderful discourse before they shaved and descended to cornbeef hash or fish-cakes or spareribs and buckwheat cakes and maple syrup. He had been convicted of plagiarism more than once. His congregation didn't accept the proven fact. Gage him, sum him up any way you will, he must have had magnetism—a magnetism that only some felt —others it repelled. The wife of his bosom (the word is but a figure of speech—they both were more than flat-chested, each was concave-breasted—Mrs. Hamilton the more so. She scooped in alarmingly, for her hips were wide and her bones were big, and she did not pad. She was far too proud and far too moral to do that) was less popular than her husband—even in their own church. Beyond it she was little known and less courted than known.

Mr. Hamilton earned—that is, received—a very large salary, and earned almost as much more with his pen, or, as some nastily said, the pens of others, and not a little by lecturing and publication in book form of both sermons and lectures. Mrs. Hamilton had a very rich and not ungenerous bachelor brother, a Chicago publisher, a straightforward, sterling man who *had* ability,

if you like, for his country school-going had been brief and scant, and from a business start as clerk at two dollars a week in a Peoria bookstore he now was secure in a fortune of seven figures. Mr. and Mrs. Hamilton had two children—Reginald and Emmeline—and no one made any doubt—unless the millionaire publisher did—that Reginald and Emmeline Hamilton would prove their uncle's sole heirs. Certainly it never occurred to his sister that her brother might rob them by leaving anything to her over their dear heads. The Hamiltons were devoted to their children and admired them intensely. To be fair, both Emmeline and Reggie loved their parents very much, and were proud of their father.

Reginald Hamilton did not intend to "hang about waiting" for his uncle's fortune. He intended to amass any number of solid gold flecks of it as he went along, but he had no mind to wait for dead men's shoes. From very youthful days he had determined to marry (and manage) a great deal of money. The lady must be beautiful, accomplished, highly connected—that above all—but she also should be really wealthy.

And that was what the younger Hamilton was doing in Washington. An English girl with a courtesy title he rather fancied, or a Countess, or Princess of one of the old Greek or Latin families. "Mr. Reginald de Courcy Seymour and Lady Edith Hamilton," that would stir Chicago, he thought. And so it certainly would! Reggie was no renegade—he liked Washington, he liked to twinkle in the capital, he intended to "do" Europe, and to do it in luxury and elegance, but he had no other thought than to shine permanently in Chicago. His determination to select—he had only to select—a rich and aristocratic wife never wavered or slacked until he fell in love with a penniless nursery governess, whose

own family tree was as variegated as a Cheyenne dance-hall.

That he had fallen in love with Ivy Gilbert he as yet only half suspected. But Emma Snow knew it perfectly, she knew all about his rich uncle Silas, and in her British innocence she supposed that Reginald had a solid bank account of his own. And hence her welcoming and more of young Hamilton that had so puzzled her, in some things, dense-pated husband.

CHAPTER X

SÊN KING-LO called upon Lady Snow, called when she was at home, two days after the night that Reginald Hamilton had caused Sir Charles' right foot to tingle and twitch under the dinner table.

And a week later Sên King-lo dined with the Snows. Again they, at dinner, were a cosy party of four. Lady Snow had wished to make the occasion a function, but Sir Charles had asked her to do nothing of the sort. And he had asked Ivy to make a point of dining at home that night. Neither woman thought of refusing to do as he asked. They both loved him too well—and his requests were too infrequent to be resented or callously disregarded. And Ivy was unaffectedly indifferent whether she dined at home that night or not. If she had dined almost tête-à-tête with Mr. Sên King-lo at Rosehill, she could do so at Emma's. And that Charles had spoken as he had of the Chinese had made more impression on her than Miss Julia's warm laudation of Mr. Sên had. Charles was a man. He had lived in China. He reasoned and thought. Miss Julia was only a woman, and felt more than she reasoned—"guessed" more than she knew.

"I shall make a 'grand toilet,' even if Charlie won't let me make it a grand dinner party," Emma Snow told her cousin, as she gouged her spoon into her breakfast grapefruit. "You can dress as much or as little as you like, Ivy. Mr. Sên will scarcely expect an unmarried girl to be gorgeous."

"After several Washington seasons!" Sir Charles said dryly. "Dress as much or as little as you like—both you girls—so long as you don't undress too much. That always puts a Chinese off—even one who knows that with us it merely is virtue unabashed."

"Don't *you* be indecent," his wife cried sharply. "I'm sure my gowns never are."

"I don't see that yellow thing you wore on Tuesday taking a prize at a Quaker meeting-house," her husband retorted quietly.

Emma dimpled. So Charlie had noticed a gown of hers for once!

"Wear something friendly looking, something homelike, as fine as you like, but nothing of the fireworks order, to put a man off his food. And *be* friendly. That's all I ask."

The two women stared in surprise.

"Perhaps you'd like to look through my rags, and tell Justine which to lay out for tonight?"

"It might not be a bad idea," Snow replied.

"Well!" Lady Snow gasped. "Would you like me to have a few Chinese flags in the drawing-room?" she demanded. "And the table decorated with red firecrackers?"

"I would not!" she was told. "For the love of Mike, be good tonight, Em!"

"I wish I knew why you care so much," she pouted.

"My dear," he assured her, "you wouldn't under-

stand a word, if I told you all about it. But I have my reasons, of course. I want Sên King-lo to feel at home here. And I want him to come again."

"Silly old politics!" the wife said scornfully. But her eyes danced. Probably Charlie would let it be a big dinner-party next time.

"Precisely!" Sir Charles confirmed. "Silly old politics."

It took Ivy Gilbert longer than usual to dress for dinner that night. She had so few evening gowns that it took quite a time to decide which she would wear. The white, she thought at first, because the self-satisfied Asiatic had said how little he cared to see women wear white. But no, that would pay him too much attention; and, after all, she was not dressing for Sên King-lo, she was dressing for Charlie. The green georgette was out of the question. It was very much the color of that linen thing she'd worn at Miss Julia's, and to repeat the color he'd proclaimed Chinese might indeed seem to pay him too much attention. It would have to be the gray or the red then. The gray was prettiest. The red suited her best and was freshest.

She hurried her hair, and glanced at the clock. Heavens! how late it was! That decided it. It would have to be the red. The gray took at least fifteen minutes and the loan of Justine to get into properly. She could dash into the red in no time at all—just over your head and it went on by itself. She dashed into the red, caught up an ornament or two that suited it—a couple of garnet bangles the children had given her on her last birthday—and two inexpensive but picturesque hair ornaments, and ran down the stairs, wishing she'd thought to find out what Emma had decided to wear—not pink, she devoutly hoped. Emma wore pink oftener than she did

anything else, and this red thing of hers and any one of Emma's half-dozen pinks simply would squeal at each other—ran down the stairs, and almost ran into the arms of Sên King-lo: a small social catastrophe his presence of mind courteously avoided. But it had been a very near thing.

They went into the drawing-room together; he quite at ease; a small flame in each of her cheeks, brought there by an odd smile that had crossed his face as he saw her in the well-lit hall.

The English girl did not know that the vivid red of her new evening gown was the exact shade that every Chinese bride wears. And it was some months later that Sên King-lo told her so.

CHAPTER XI

WHEN changing for dinner Ivy—a little cross from an unusually hot schoolroom friction—had thought to herself, "It will be a sort of lantern lecture on China —a lantern lecture with the slides left out, I suppose. I wish Charles hadn't made a point of my dining. Lucille would have jumped at coming, and Emmeline Hamilton would have groveled to Emma for the chance."

But China was not mentioned at dinner. And long before the sweets Miss Gilbert had forgotten that her cousin's guest was not as European as they three. His quiet repose was more English than Reginald Hamilton's broad vowels—and so were his manners. And she began to realize why Miss Julia so liked Mr. Sên, and why Sir Charles had so welcomed him. He was a sunny, considerate companion, as free from "side" as he was from servility. He talked most to Lady Snow, of course, but

he glanced oftener and longer at her cousin; and his hostess saw that he did.

Sên King-lo thought the girl friendlier and more interesting than she had been before, and he thought that tonight she looked almost more Chinese than she had done at Rosehill. The rings of garnet and enamel that dangled in her dark hair, and moved with her head, had more than a look of stick-pins, and her dark eyes almost were almond-shaped. He liked that stick-pin look, and the gentle constant movement in the girl's dark hair. But he made no mistake. He knew it as accidental as the bride-red dress she wore tonight, or the jade-green and the dangling pepper baubles had been. Of a race that sees little of women who are not belongings, or detrimentals, or peasants, yet Sên made few misjudgments of women. He knew why Miss Hamilton wore peacock feathers and dragon embroideries and Japanese jewelry that she believed Chinese, and—like half the girls in Washington just now—clattered as she walked, with the noise of bangles she believed to be jade. But he sensed that this girl was virginal, had dignity, and thought her own the super-race; all three qualities which he liked. He did not agree with her as to which was the super-race. But he liked her for her own conviction; he thought it a womanliness.

The table-talk was general, of course—only the four at the small round table—and it was most of it impersonal. But it was interesting talk, Ivy thought, and she rose a little reluctantly when Lady Snow rose. Ivy was sorry that dinner was over.

Sir Charles Snow was not. "Don't expect us in the drawing-room quite as soon as is best politeness," he told his wife. "I particularly want to pick Mr. Sên King-lo's brains, and a secret or two, if it can be done."

Sên King-lo's eyes sparkled good-humoredly. "I shall try to be picked very swiftly," he said to the girl as she followed Lady Snow through the door he held. "To Hecuba, Sir Charles," he bade his host as they reseated themselves. "My brains are at your service, and my secrets too, if I've any that are mine only—but I'm afraid I haven't."

"I lived in China a number of years," Snow said, pouring the port, "as you probably did not know."

Sên laughed. "But, of course, I did. We have a list—a fairly accurate list, I fancy—at the 'shop' of every official, and of every one else worth watching, in Washington now, who has been in our country, or has interests there."

"To be sure! I might have known that. But, I don't suppose you know anything about what I did in China—it wasn't much, and you were the merest child then, still smelling of your mother's milk."

The Chinese face quickened at the other's use of a Chinese saying. Then it grew graver, and Sên said a little sadly:

"We have to grow old rapidly now, we Chinese who love our country, and wish to serve her. I know what year you landed in China, what boat you took there, how long you stayed, much of what you did, where you lived and went most of the time, who many of your Chinese friends were. And that was one reason—only one—why I was so particularly pleased when I received Lady Snow's note, kindly saying that I might dine with her and make your acquaintance—for I don't suppose we count as acquaintance the few k'o-tow nods we've exchanged at your 'shop' and mine."

"No—precisely," Snow agreed. "Well—as you know then, I must try not to feel too flattered by what is

purely a bit of detail work of a painstaking patriotism, you know that I have lived in China all told quite a lump of moons——"

"A year and seven weeks longer than I have myself —all told."

"By Jove! You have been exiled as much as that?"

"Yes," the Chinese said gravely.

"Well, Mr. Sên, a man knows his own country better —certainly more naturally—than any foreigner can. But you and I know that the old myth that no European can know anything very vital about China, or the Chinese, or understand either at all, is untrue."

Sên King-lo nodded and smiled across the cigarette he was lighting. "Tommy-rot," he said.

"Parkes knew China—quite a good deal about you —and Hart did, and Macartney."

Sên King-lo nodded again.

"And there have been others."

"And there have been others," Sên King-lo said. "And there are now—a few. We need more."

"I hope you'll get them," the host said cordially. "But if you don't, I expect you'll make shift without them."

"I hope so," Sên replied. "But it will take longer to accomplish what we must."

"Much longer," Snow added. "Next to my own country and people, I like and admire *and trust* yours, Mr. Sên."

The Chinese lifted his glass. "And next to my own country and my own countrymen, I like and admire and trust yours, sir," he said, and drank.

"When the Manchu fell," Snow began when he, too, had tasted his port,—"frankly I wish they had not——"

Sên King-lo smiled. "We all regret—some more,

some less—that they had to, all of us who love self less and China more, I think. But it had to come."

"Possibly," the other conceded. "I don't own that I see it. But we need not quarrel over that."

"*We* shall not quarrel over anything," Sên said simply.

"No, I don't think we shall. Well—I hope that the Manchu may come back."

"Why?" Sên King-lo asked.

"Best dynasty you ever had. And I don't like republics. Don't believe in them. And for an Oriental people—well, in my opinion they smell to heaven."

Sên King-lo laughed. "Do you think the Manchu was a good dynasty in its last reigns?" he questioned.

"I do," Snow said stoutly. "It gave you the two finest rulers any country ever had—any country, bar none."

"You mean K'ang-hi and K'ien-lung."

"I do."

Sên King-lo smiled again, but he drained the glass Sir Charles had refilled.

"Twenty Sun-Yat-sens would not out-balance either K'ang-hi or K'ien-lung. And I hope the Manchu will come back. And I don't like dethronements."

"We've had a good many in China."

"Not exactly. Conquering princes and warriors have mounted, usurped, if you like, the throne of the Emperor they've unseated—but that's a very different thing from a people voluntarily dismissing their ruler. And when they do it at foreign instigation and chicanery—to my mind it is without excuse."

"Mencius taught 'Killing a bad monarch is no murder,'" Sên remarked.

"Then Mencius was, to my thinking, a bit of a Bolshevik," Snow retorted.

Sên King-lo laughed pleasantly. That he did—at such hot derision of the Sage, showed how tight Young China had gripped him, how far Old China had lost him.

"I hate to see China a republic," Snow insisted. "And I stand by the Manchu. You will dislike my saying that——"

"And that is why you say it."

"Exactly. I want to start fair."

"So I thought, Sir Charles. But I do not dislike your saying it, or even your feeling so. I think you are wrong," Sên King-lo inclined his head courteously towards the older and host, "but if a man himself is thoroughly sound, I don't think that it matters very desperately what views he holds. I believe that neither an incorruptible man, nor any views he has, will do himself or any one else much harm. For our weal or our woe, the Manchu *has* gone—for a time, or for ever—and we, we Chinese, must do the best we can for our country, with things as they are. And we can't very well import an Emperor made in Germany."

"God forbid! But you could choose one of your *own*."

"Would you have us crown Sun-Yat-sen?"

"That's the last thing I'd have you do," Snow retorted grimly. "But there are *men*—good men, in China."

"Yes," Sên King-lo agreed, noncommittally. "You have started splendidly fair," he added with a pleasant grin, "and now you wish to ask me something?"

"Yes; that was why I wouldn't let my wife have half Washington here tonight. I wanted a chance to talk with you alone—to find out several things from you,

if I could. You won't tell me, of course. Your Minister won't, and you, of course, cannot and should not; but I might gather something from the way your reticence shaped—I'm an old hand, you know."

The young Chinese laughed gleefully. He liked this Englishman.

"Shantung?" he asked, gravely.

"No—not Shantung. I know what you and every decent Chinese wish and plan and hope concerning the sacred province. I wish it too, Sên King-lo."

"Thank you," Sên said quietly.

"I'd like to know, if I might, how you—you individually—believe that China's regeneration may best be brought about. You'll pardon me the word?"

"I use it myself," Sên said gravely. "I believe that the foundation of China's new strength and health must be financial. Her greatest and sharpest peril is financial—most specifically from her use of foreign money, and from foreign financiers' misdealings with her. That is why I am keeping so long an exile, Sir Charles. I am studying European and American banking methods."

"May I ask to what end?" Snow's face was aglow.

"We—many who think as I do—are earnestly anxious to see every bank in China entirely in Chinese hands; entirely, adequately, exclusively capitalized by Chinese money and securities."

"By God!" The table rang under the blow of the Englishman's hand. "You've got the right end of the stick. By the holy Harry, you have! Accomplish that, and you'll accomplish everything."

"So we think."

The two men smoked in silence for several moments. Then Sir Charles spoke quietly.

"I wonder if you know what my Chinese holdings are?"

"Almost to a yen, I fancy. I certainly know that you are a rich man in China. And, too, that you never have parted with a Chinese security, except to buy another, even in our country's darkest hours."

"I never have. I never shall. Yes, I've a good deal salted down in China—a great deal more than I'd like Lady Snow to know. She has a rare taste in diamonds and no mean liking for lace and other chiffons."

Sên's eyes twinkled. "I'll betray no yâmen secrets, Sir Charles," he promised.

Snow waved that aside. He knew that. Nor did he think it worth while to remark that no confidence of Sên King-lo's would ever be even impinged on by him. He was right; it was not necessary. They understood each other.

"You want only Chinese capital in the banks of China, and no control that is not Chinese."

"None; neither a yen nor a man; Chinese capital and Chinese shareholders only, and Chinese management and service, from the managers to the 'boys' at the doors and the coolies who clean."

"Precisely—but I daresay you'll accept foreign depositors well accredited and sifted, and foreign customers?"

"Of course. Every civilized banker accepts any good account that is not an enemy account, and buys and sells to any who can pay his charges. We've no scheme to run freak banks. The heyday of the freak is waning."

"I hope so," Snow said—but with a touch of dubiousness.

"But we—we'll accept foreign accounts, not court

them. It is Chinese money, Chinese-owned, that we shall aim to attract."

"Such a Rome will not be built in a day," the Englishman told him.

"Nor in too few years," Sên agreed.

"I'd like to be among your first depositors," Snow said slowly. "I'll tell you what I am going to do, Sên King-lo; I'm going to hold all I have in China at your disposal. I'll throw it in as securities—I'll float it into cash, and deposit it *en bloc,* when your national banks are ready—and I'll deposit as well the interest you pay me—we'll *call* it a ninety days' deposit—say until Dick, my youngster, is thirty; that gives you a fairly good run, if you get your shutters up pretty soon—and I'll bind myself and my estate to make no withdrawal, little or big, after that, without giving you very long notice, and, as well, I'll hedge you well about against my doing so—or my heirs—at any time of special inconvenience to the bank. All I've got will be just a drop in the bank bucket, of course, but even drops come in handy in times of drought. My Chinese holdings are at China's service. And the execution of a good, all-Chinese banking scheme would be the best service of China I can think of. I'll do a bit more than that: I will sell you—your bankers or your nominee or nominees—any or all holdings of mine in your country, and sell at a minimum price, whenever you feel that you are strong enough to stand alone—and see us get out. I'd like to be one of the first to get in—into your banks, and I'd like to be the last European to get out. But I'll hold myself pledged to go when you say, 'Go.'"

"I wish you owned Shantung," Sên King-lo said tersely.

"I wish I did!" Snow replied. "In the meantime,"

he continued, "if you care to avail yourself of a little foreign capital, during the expensive and more or less experimental preliminary months or years, I'd be glad to have you use mine. It's at your service."

The Chinese are said to be unemotional. It is not true. The upper classes—at least the men—carry self-control to an obsession, and have made it a fine art; but high or low, there are no stolid Chinese. To a man their emotions are quick and extreme.

Sên King-lo made no reply. He looked both imperturbable and nonchalant, sitting easily there in his perfect Western attire, carelessly turning a cigarette in his fine yellow fingers, his eyes on the tiny cylinder with which he toyed. His face did not change in any way. But he did not look up—because his eyes were a trifle humid.

"You offer to take a large risk," he said at last, "a very unusual risk. You know nothing of me. And what if the Manchu, or some other dynasty, did come back? We are scheming and looking towards a republican national bank. Had you thought of that?"

"Of course I had," Snow asserted. "It is up to China to decide her own affairs. I'd like to see the Manchu back, but I'm not in any way out for it. If you enjoy your Republic—well, it's up to you. On the other hand, if the Manchu *should* come back, they'd destroy no good thing that you or any one else had done for their country. It isn't their way. They might make you grow a few queues — but their revenge wouldn't go much further than that, I'm thinking. And, as for my not knowing you, don't be too sure. We have an Intelligence Department also, however pigmy it may be compared to yours. But, frankly, no, I do not know much of you. You are a youngster. Whitehall has not

got its eye on you—yet. May never have. I do not know you. But I claim to know your race and your caste."

"We have no castes in China."

"Nonsense; there is caste everywhere—from Patagonia to Greenland. And—I know your family. I knew your father slightly. I knew one of his brothers better. I knew Sên Wang Yat very well indeed—your father's second cousin, wasn't he? I do not need to know you. I know the Sêns."

"Thank you," the guest said quietly. But he looked up now, and his face was not expressionless. "But—it is extraordinary—what you offer. I wonder why!"

"And you'd like to know! I believe in China's future. I believe your bank idea is sound—the soundest! I am fond of China. I like your people. Those are four of my reasons. I have one other—a sentimental reason. Some day—just possibly—" He broke off and struck a match.

Sên showed neither surprise nor curiosity. He felt neither. That a diplomat and, as he knew, also a keen politician, should prove to be, too, an idealist, was not very common, but as he knew as well, it was not particularly rare.

He liked Snow none the less for it. All Chinese are idealists.

That this man "wanted something" in return never entered Sên's mind. He was not a bad judge of men.

"I was anxious to have you here, rather *en famille,* because I wished to learn, if I could—even a hint or two—several things that I've no doubt you know. Well, I am not going to pump you tonight, but I hope you'll come and see us as often and as informally—just drop

in, you know—as often as it does not bore you. I hope it, no matter how completely I fail to make the pump work."

"It will not bore me," Sên told him. "It will delight me, if Lady Snow—and Miss Gilbert—will allow me."

"Oh, that's all right—shall we go to them now? You're a great success with the ladies, I've heard it whispered."

Sên King-lo made a merry and contemptuous shrug as he rose. "Yes," he said, as he opened the door for his host—Old China had not lost him quite!—"Yes—I am quite the fashion."

"I was almost asleep," Lady Snow asserted with a pretty combination of yawn and grumble, as the two men came in. "Come, wake me thoroughly up, Mr. Sên."

"With pleasure," he told her.

She made a pretty picture, her husband thought, in her draperies of peacock-blue and apple-green—how much had *they* cost? he wondered indulgently—and a discreet swarm of about half her second best diamonds—he knew perfectly well what they had cost. And Sên King-lo proceeded to amuse her gaily and devotedly. But she saw his eyes sweep the room.

"Where's Ivy?" Snow demanded.

"Coming back," his wife told him. "She said so."

Some time passed before Ivy did. She had a book in her hand then, and she carried it to Sên King-lo.

"Will you write in my confession book, Mr. Sên?" she asked.

"May I?" he said as he rose to take it.

Charles threw his cousin a cordial glance. She was

a good girl. She'd thought of that to please him he was sure.

And Sên King-lo thought so too.

They were right—but more wrong than right. For herself Ivy Gilbert had no wish that Sên King-lo should write in her confession book. But she knew how it would excite Lucille and Molly, and how they'd enjoy it and chatter about it. And that chiefly was why she'd trudged upstairs and down to get the vellum-bound volume.

"Shall I write in English or in Chinese?" Sên asked her.

"In both, please—use two places."

"I shall obey," he promised. "May I take it away with me? One needs preparation and prayer for a supreme literary effort."

"Of course," the girl nodded.

"Is your own in it?" Sên asked her.

"One has to set the ball rolling," she answered.

"May I look?" He turned to the first page, as she nodded.

"What perfectly soul-scouring queries!" he jibed. "No, I shall not study your revelations of your utmost self until later," he announced, closing the toy. But the quick Chinese eyes must have caught one question and answer, for he said, "So riding is your favorite pastime, Miss Gilbert. Do you often ride here?"

"Almost never; Sir Charles hasn't often the time to take me. Lady Snow's lazy, she hates riding, and I hate riding alone—with only a groom to follow."

"I wonder," Sên replied, "if—after we are older friends, Lady Snow would allow me to ride with you some day, Miss Gilbert? And I very much wonder, if you'd let me? Miss Julia Townsend says she'd ride with

me, if she were younger, and I have driven her several times in my dog-cart, without a groom."

"I've no doubt Miss Julia would ride with you in a balloon—if you wished it," Miss Gilbert said severely.

"Happy thought!" Sên retorted. "Shall I ask her?"

"Let me be there when you ask her," Emma Snow giggled.

"Let me be there when you go up," was Sir Charles' request. "She'd go all right, I've no doubt of that. She's a splendid sport."

"She's a delightful, wonderful woman," Sên King-lo added. "Will you let me take you, Miss Gilbert—if Lady Snow will allow me?"

"In a balloon?"

"Not for worlds," Sên declined; "on a horse. I have one that would carry a lady perfectly, Lady Snow."

"The chaperon's as dead as Queen Anne," the young matron said. "And Miss Gilbert is one of the new dispensations." She spoke lightly, cordially even—but her husband shot her a puzzled look. He knew—he knew every tone and tint of her voice so well—that for some odd reason Emma was not pleased.

"I am not!" Ivy asserted coldly. "I despise them."

"Will you—ride—some day?" Sên persisted.

Ivy flushed. "I am teaching most of the time, Mr. Sên, or trying to," she told him.

"Nonsense! And untrue!" Lady Snow cried. "Don't dare to pretend you are not at your own perfect liberty all the time. My cousin helps me—when she wishes—with my kiddies. You must see them, at lunch, some day soon. They are dears. But Ivy is as free to junket as I am—freer—and she's a little cat to pretend she isn't. It's one of her affectations—just to tease me. And you need not lend her a mount—we have quite a

decent one, she and I, between us, just eating his head off—a groom has to give it enough exercise to keep it on its legs. I never ride except when my husband takes me and makes me, because it's one of the things I do not care for at all. And Ivy won't—because she's contrary. But Wolf carries her perfectly. So——"

"So—perhaps—some day—Miss Gilbert will give me the pleasure," Sên King-lo said, and dismissed it. For he saw that Miss Gilbert had no wish to ride with him—and he himself cared very little either way. He turned to Sir Charles to speak of something quite else, but Lady Snow spoke before he could.

"Do you ride much?" she asked.

"Fairly often," he told her.

"Have you ridden with Mrs. Gunter? I think no one here rides as well as she does—no one I've seen."

"No," Sên said. "I have ridden to hounds in England, but, except for that, I never have ridden with any lady. Here I have a quick canter by myself, sometimes at daybreak."

"How perfectly awful!" his hostess groaned—quite sincerely. "At daybreak! Mr. Sên, how can you?"

"We are all early risers—we Chinese," he told her.

The sudden red pulsed into Ivy's face. She was angry that it did—but she turned to Sên King-lo, and said impulsively, "When will you take me for our ride, Mr. Sên?"

"Whenever you will let me," he answered quietly, with a slight, grave bow. He showed no surprise. But he was surprised, as her cousins were. They both were gazing at her in almost open blank amazement. Ivy rarely changed her mind.

Again Sên King-lo made no mistake. He could not imagine the cause of her *volte face,* but he was perfectly

sure that it was not that she wished to ride with him. And because she did not wish to, he regretted that he had suggested it—or she consented.

"Next Thursday?" Ivy persisted. "But you won't ask me to be ready at daybreak?"

"Next Thursday. Thank you so much," he replied. "The hour you prefer will give me the greatest pleasure."

"Ten, then; before it is hot," Ivy decided. Lucille often rode at ten.

"Come to breakfast, Mr. Sên," Lady Snow said cordially. "We breakfast at nine."

"You are very kind, Lady Snow," Sên replied. "I will not be late." But the invitation had pleased the Chinese man as little as it had the English girl.

"Play to us, Ivy," Sir Charles asked presently, not because talk was flagging—it wasn't—but because he particularly liked his young cousin's music. But Ivy would neither play nor sing.

"You'll have to put up with mine," his wife told him. "When Ivy says she won't, she won't," and went to the open piano. Emma Snow played brilliantly, far better than their cousin, if not so sweetly as Ivy did. Dress was not Lady Snow's only talent. She had several, veiling them serenely under a radiant frou-frou of chiffons—that she did so, not, perhaps, the least of her talents.

"Your turn," she bade Sên as she rose. "I know you do. You do everything, don't you, Mr. Sên?"

"Not nearly," he assured her. "Is Beethoven your favorite composer?" She had played the Moonlight Sonata. "Or what shall I play for you?"

"No," she answered. "I just happened to play Beethoven—at random. Play something you like best."

He chose Grieg.

Ivy wondered if he had seen her favorite composer, as well as her favorite pastime. One was just above the other in the confession-book. She wished she'd never brought it downstairs.

He had not. Sên King-lo had as little inclination to initiate a flirtation with Miss Gilbert as she had to with him—even, possibly, a little less. He deemed flirtations even more vulgar than she did—and he had no ambition to excite jealousy in Lucille, or in any one else, and no sore, young desire to prove himself, in spite of poverty and schoolroom bondage, no social failure.

If he had seen, or known, that Grieg was Miss Gilbert's favorite composer, he would not have played any music of Grieg's.

Grieg was Sên King-lo's favorite composer.

Soon after that he told them goodnight. He bowed to his hostess without offering to shake hands. But Lady Snow held out her hand to him, and then Miss Gilbert could but do the same.

Sên King-lo took her hand in his deferentially, but more lightly, less lingering that she was accustomed to have men do. Yet—as he did—from some indefinable thing in his touch—it flashed across her thought that that slim Chinese hand might not after all give a feeble account of itself at fisticuffs.

Sir Charles Snow went to the outer door with Sên.

"The celestial dragon, smoothly as a swan, carry your honorable person on high!" Snow said.

"May lotus flowers grow from the honorable bones of your distinguished ancestors!" Sên King-lo replied. "And may your honorable grave be soaked with the tears of an hundred sons."

"Heaven forbid!" Snow exclaimed.

Then they both laughed and shook hands, and bade each other an English goodnight.

"Well—cheerio. So glad you could come."

"Jolly glad I could. Thanks awfully. Cheerio."

The East and the West get within hailing distance, at least now and then.

CHAPTER XII

IT was not late the next morning when Mr. Sên's orchids came—to Lady Snow, of course. He sent nothing to Miss Gilbert—but she could scarcely expect her confession-book back so soon. One wrote in confession-books at one's leisure, and when in the mood. That was understood.

"I wonder if he'll pay his dinner-call today?" Emma said to her husband, when at lunch he'd remarked on the splendid blooms on the table, and she'd mentioned who had sent them.

"I don't suppose he's going to live here," Ivy Gilbert remarked rather unnecessarily.

"I don't suppose he is," Lady Snow said cheerfully, "but he's sure to call promptly—Charlie said so."

"I?" the knight she'd quoted demanded.

"You said the Chinese were punctiliously polite. It amounts to the same thing."

"Bless my soul!" Sir Charles muttered.

"I think I'll go out calling tomorrow instead of today. I'd be vexed to miss him."

"Do you like Mr. Sên?" Ivy asked indifferently.

"I don't dislike him. I thought he was good fun. Do you, Ivy?"

"Which?"

"Both."

"He is not my idea of fun."

"Nor mine," Sir Charles added.

"But he doesn't bore me—if that's what you mean," the girl owned lazily. "As for liking him—I don't know him. I've met him three or four times. What does that amount to? And, you know, my likes are few. They don't stretch to China."

"Nor your knowledge," her cousin Charles reminded her.

Ivy nodded contentedly. She was not interested in China or in the Chinese; and she was not going to pretend that she was, even to please dear old Charlie. She'd be polite—for him—but surely that was enough. "Wouldn't you better put your orchids in the drawing-room, Em?" she said, with a laugh.

"I intend to," Lady Snow retorted. "There is a big vase full there already. I brought these in here for Charlie to enjoy."

"Thank you, my dear." He might have added—but did not—that he did not care for orchids, except when they were growing.

"But I shall only have them in here at meals."

"The peripatetic orchids," Ivy said gaily. "Well, you and the orchids will have to entertain Mr. Sên all alone, Emma, if he comes. I'm off to Miss Julia's."

"I rather think I'll have plenty of visitors today—though it isn't my day," Lady Snow returned. "It is in the *Post,* and it's sure to be copied in the *Evening Star,* that Mr. Sên King-lo dined here last night."

"Great Scott!" was her husband's comment.

Ivy giggled.

"Yes," Emma told her, "I did. Justine knows a

reporter. I never have any difficulty getting my nice bits in."

"I wouldn't do that, dear," Snow said uncomfortably.

"Of course you wouldn't. You're a man. I shall. I like them in. Marion Lawson will be green. He never dined there *en famille*."

"You didn't put that in!" her cousin cried. And Sir Charles looked distinctly disturbed.

"No," Lady Snow owned. "But I shall tell Marion."

"I'm sure you will," Ivy laughed, and the man retired philosophically to his ice-pudding.

"You'd have looked nice if he hadn't turned up after all," the girl remarked.

"Well—" the other confessed, "I almost was in a wee panic. But I felt pretty safe. He'd accepted, and Charlie says their word is as good as another man's bond."

This time her husband did not expostulate or contradict.

They were dining out that evening, and Ivy hurried back in time to dress.

"Well," she asked, as they drove away towards Fifteen-and-one-half Street, "did Mr. Sên call, Emma?"

"No," Lady Snow admitted, "he didn't. But half the girls in Washington did. Emmeline Hamilton called, of course. She came early and stayed late. I thought she'd never go. She stole an orchid. And when she saw that I'd seen her sneak it into her vanity bag, she simpered and sighed—like this——"

Ivy giggled.

Sir Charles told her, "You giggle just like a Chinese girl, Ivy."

She frowned with vexation. It was too much! Her own cousin!

"Oh—" he had seen the frown—it was still light—"you needn't frown. Chinese girls have the prettiest giggles imaginable—not a scrap like our women giggle—for all the world like the tinkle of ivory bells. So is yours. I say, giggle again. Can you?"

Ivy gave him a dagger look.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed, "I'm blowed if you don't look a bit Chinese too sometimes. Your eyes—or something. And you do tonight in that gown, and with those stick-pin things in your hair."

The girl bit her lip sharply. She was wearing her new red dress again—she never had many gowns to choose from—and the garnet rings dangled in her hair. Charlie had seen what the Chinese man had claimed to see. It was intolerable!

When Ivy Gilbert followed Lady Snow into the drawing-room the girl's eyes were still stormy.

That was on Tuesday.

Sên King-lo called on Lady Snow the next afternoon. She was out, and her cousin was with her. Mr. Sên left three cards.

On Thursday he came duly to breakfast—five minutes before the hour.

To his surprise, and then amusement, and not a little to Ivy's dismay, Sên King-lo and Miss Gilbert had breakfast alone.

The children, who as a rule shared and excited that meal with their parents, were closely interned in their schoolroom quarters, because of unattractive colds that might, their mother thought, develop into whooping-cough. A cable from Downing Street had sent Sir Charles in hot haste and breakfastless to the British Embassy an hour ago. His wife had danced a slight

but painful sprain into her left ankle the night before, and was obliged to breakfast in bed.

Miss Gilbert explained and apologized, and led the way to the breakfast-room.

Sên had the tact not to offer to defer his breakfast visit. It would have been an enormity, of course, but for some puzzle of a reason Ivy had half expected it. And it had crossed Lady Snow's mind that he might—but she had not said so.

Miss Gilbert was annoyed, and still more annoyed that she was. But her annoyance wore off quickly. Sên King-lo saw to that as deftly as unobtrusively. He greatly regretted missing Sir Charles. But he accepted the small situation quite as the very small thing it was, and set himself to dispel the displeasure that he clearly saw, though Miss Gilbert felt sure that she hid it completely.

He thought that this girl with the intangible but haunting something of China about her, disliked him. He did not resent it in the least. He himself disliked a good many acquaintances. He was sorry for her that the three small family accidents had driven her into a tête-à-tête meal that he saw jarred. It didn't enchant him. He preferred looking at Miss Gilbert to talking to her. But he scarcely could gaze at her in silence from melon to preserved ginger—so he addressed himself to chat away her ill-ease and displeasure. Why she had elected to ride with him at all still puzzled him. He was sorry she had, and vexed with himself that he had troubled her with the invitation. He'd make it up to her as well as he could. She should enjoy that ride if he could contrive it.

Why she so minded breakfasting alone with Sên King-lo was a question the girl herself could have an-

swered but lamely. She often had lunched alone with a man friend, and as often had given tea in Emma's absence to a man she knew even more slightly than she did Mr. Sên. If she could ride with this man, it was no great odds to break her cousin's bread with him. Uncle Lysander's smoldering disapproval at her elbow might have disconcerted her a little perhaps—for, while it angered her, she must have somewhat sympathized with it. It is not pleasant, unless one is very self-sure indeed, to feel that the servant who offers you cutlets and omelette considers you bad form. But the Snow servants—except Justine—were all English, and it was evident that neither Dawson nor William saw any indignity in bending over Mr. Sên's chair. She did not know why she disliked this breakfast so—but she did. Unreasonable, perhaps. But the fact stood.

For all his intelligence Sên King-lo was at fault in his explanation of the displeasure he recognized. It did not occur to him that this English girl did not object to breakfasting alone with *him,* but with *a Chinese.* He put it all down to a personal dislike of him personally. It did not vex him in the least. Had he believed that she thought him beneath her—which he did not—it would not have vexed him. Had he realized that it was the Chinese race that she looked down upon and considered socially unfit, it would have vexed him as little. Sên King-lo, the sash-wearer, was even more sure, far more sure, of his race than he was of himself. His estimate of self was humble. His estimate of China was very proud. He was proud and joyous to be Chinese.

They breakfasted briefly, but before he moved back her chair, Ivy had confessed to herself that the West had done this stranger within its far gates well—for, if Mr.

Sên never had seen a Chinese girl, he exquisitely knew how to treat an English girl, and how to care for her tiniest comforts. And she complimented Western sojourn and example for what centuries of Chinese breeding had given—as nothing else can.

They went to their waiting horses, outwardly cordial, but inwardly each was a little perturbed. Ivy very much doubted if he could ride—what she called ride. He dressed the part without fault, which she always had thought that only a British man could do—but, after all, it was much a matter of tailor and boot-maker; no doubt Mr. Sên had a London tailor. Sên wondered how well his companion could ride. He loved to *go*. Never mind—he reproached himself—this was *her* ride, and, if she couldn't ride, they'd walk. And she should enjoy herself—this girl with his mother's name—who was starting off, he knew, so reluctantly. Why, he wondered again, was she going at all?

She could mount—that was his first discovery. She rose a feather-weight from his hand. Her discovery was that her unusual escort could mount her at all. That he did it expertly was a pleasant surprise. And she realized that his slender hand had been rock-firm under her foot. It was a good beginning at least. In the pleasure of even that small relief she smiled down at him graciously as he straightened her habit.

"Why, Mr. Sên," she laughed, "you must have mounted many girls. I thought from what you said the other night that you scarcely had ridden with one."

He laughed back at her, lingering a moment at her bridle. "I never have ridden with one, Miss Gilbert —never with any girl. But I have mounted a great number of ladies—one any number of times—no less a

personage than a duchess—the Duchess of Westershire. So, you see, I've had distinguished practice."

"Never!" the English girl cried. "The Duchess of Westershire must weigh fourteen stone, if she weighs an ounce."

"Nearer forty, I'd wager."

"You needn't tell me she can ride."

"She can mount," Sên insisted.

"Didn't she crack your hand in two?"

"Went up like down."

"Did she ride to hounds?"

"She rode towards them," Sên stated guardedly.

Ivy chuckled. And Sên King-lo swung up into his saddle.

It was a better beginning than Miss Gilbert realized. Make a Chinese laugh, or help him to laugh, and his world is yours—at least for the moment.

They eyed each other's horsemanship guilefully. There was nothing for either to cavil at yet. The girl's seat was perfect. Sên's was no less.

Still he was cautious. The groom behind heard them laugh more than once—but it was she who suggested, as they turned into Dupont Circle, "A little faster?"

Still Sên King-lo set but a moderately quickened pace. They still were keeping it so when they met Miss Smith face to face. But he had no doubt now that this girl could ride, and her English eyes, almost as quick to horsemanship as his were to most things, knew that Sên King-lo rode as well as a Derby jockey.

And, if he rode today to please a girl who—he thought—disliked him, Sên King-lo rode to win.

They rode far, and after the banks of Rock Creek they pushed on into the country, and rode faster and faster.

"How joyous!" she called to him once, in a camaraderie that knew no race distinctions.

"Glorious, isn't it!" Sên answered.

"You ride better than Charles does even," she told him blithely; "and you ride our English fashion. You rise in your saddle."

"I learned to ride in England when I was a boy at school," he explained. "But I usually ride American fashion when I jog off by myself."

"Why?" she asked quickly.

"I enjoy it more."

"Oh," the girl said, a little disdainfully.

"You ought to try it," he ventured. "Don't you think it prettier?"

But the English girl would not own that. "Our way is the kinder," she insisted.

"To the nags? Yes," Sên agreed, "it certainly seems so. But your cavalrymen did not rise in their stirrups until recently. You should try it—sometimes."

She shook her head.

"I don't like learning new ways, Mr. Sên."

"Or languages?"

"You don't call Chinese a new language, do you?"

"It would be to you," he retorted. "By the way, there are a great many distinct Chinese languages, nearly sixty. I wonder which you'd admire—least."

"Horrors!" the girl cried. But she laughed softly—because he had said "least" when she'd thought he was going to say "most."

And he laughed back at her, because the speed they'd gone was tingling in his blood.

"Thank you, Mr. Sên," she said, as they stood waiting for Dawson or William to open the door. "I have so enjoyed it."

"Truly?" He asked it gravely.

"I've loved it," she told him.

"I wonder then," Dawson heard him say, "if you'll let me take you again some day?"

"I'd love it," she answered.

The Chinese man gave her a grateful look. It was sincere. He was grateful that a girl who disliked him, had had—as he knew she had—a good time. And he was gratified that he had done what he had tried to do. Sên King-lo was very human.

That afternoon he sent Lady Snow a wealth of flowers —a note of condolence for her accident, all fragrant with their perfume.

And this time Ivy too had her tribute, tea-roses, and on the card he sent with them Sên King-lo had written a word: "Thanks."

Again Miss Gilbert took her blossoms to her own room. There were flowers enough in the drawing- and sitting-rooms, and Emma's room looked like a flower-show. Ivy put her roses in water—one bud she tucked in her gown. She was fond of tea-roses.

CHAPTER XIII

AS he walked his horse slowly back to his rooms, Sên King-lo, thinking the morning over, concluded that he liked the girl he had just ridden with very much indeed. And he began to suspect that she was more interesting than he had thought her. They had not said a great deal to each other this morning—and none of it even remotely profound. He had had to make all the conversational running at breakfast; and on horseback, when the pace is swift, as most of their long ride had

been, is not provocative or well calculated for profound or subtle conversation. But a thought-straw or two from the chaff of her small talk had pointed, he thought, to a mental equipment less ordinary than he had suspected. And she had seemed even younger today—looked younger too, in the searching early light, though less Chinese in her businesslike English riding gear than she had to him before—and she had seemed to him intrinsically young each time they had met—as untraveled twenty-two usually does to traveled twenty-seven. Youth appealed to Sên King-lo. Being Chinese, deeply and typically so, he sincerely reverenced age, felt for it unaffected affection; but it did not lure him—and he was in no way un-Chinese in this. Her youth appealed to his. Next to beauty, what lured him most, as they most lure all of his race, were loyalty, breeding and pluck—probably the first and the last because they tune and key with the loyalty that is deep-grained in most Chinese, and with the pluck that is innate in them all. Her reserve had seemed to him from the first a trait of breeding, in no way a trait of shyness. In truth, Ivy Gilbert had less claim to the title of "sash-wearer" than he had—and less than he thought she showed. Her birth was far less aristocratic than his, not so much because his ancestors had been noble and distinguished for untarnished centuries when hers were wading wode-clad or wodeless in the unreclaimed marshlands of Thorney, as because many a plebeian ancestor had contributed to her being, and not one to his. So far back that she barely knew it, and thought of it as the long-off, hazy thing it was, there had been strawberry-leaves in Ivy Gilbert's ancestry, but both they and their bar sinister smelt strongly of fish now—not the salt, fishy tang of scaled giants caught with peril and prowess,

but the staler smell of fish in shrouds of parsley and ice on tradesmen's marble slabs.

Ivy's ancestry was as weird a patchwork as was ever a New England quilt. Sên King-lo's was one almost royal blue. And it had no bar sinister. There are few bar sinisters in China. Perhaps the Chinese manage man's wide-flung proclivities more wisely than we do. It could be argued. Certainly they punish little children for prenatal happenings less than we do. They suffer them all to come welcomed and desired into life, suffer them all to wear with untainted right their father's name—and, not less a boon and a gladness, to love their mothers and be loved by their mothers unashamed. The twenty little flags of British preference and prejudice she'd fluttered out, scarcely with cause, each time they'd met, he took for a young and feminine display of a loyalty that was both sound and sweet. He liked her for it. Her open affection and pride for her cousin Charles, he liked her for, even more. Chinese loyalty has been for its thousands of years far more a thing of family and clan than of country or race —and Young China has had scant time to alter that yet; and it was not altered in Sên King-lo. Her good-natured and sunny treatment of him—so disliking him —he was very sure she disliked him—seemed to him both good-breeding and pluck.

To a point he was right. It had been both—at first. For some quirk or reason—he, try as he would, could not yet fathom what it was—she had ridden with him sorely against her inclination, and having done it of her own untrammeled determination—or freak—she had paid the small social debt it obligated in sunny, good humored companionship; too socially honest, too well-bred to default. Sên King-lo liked her for that. Her

honesty appealed to him—true son that he was of a race that must, to a man, pay *all* its debts in full at least once a year. Of how many peoples can that be said? And again, Sên was right, up to a point. The girl was too well-bred, too socially honest, having gone with him voluntarily, to treat him sourly or over-stiffly, and not to do so *had* taken pluck—at first. And he liked her for riding so well, as any man who was horse-fond must have done.

Yes—he liked her. He liked her, of the women he knew here, next to Miss Julia Townsend, perhaps. And he certainly liked her very much more than he did even the least unlikeable of the unmarried girls and matrons who banded together to "run after" him—a free, if not easy, inter-racial attention that Sên King-lo valued the tawdry freak thing it was. It both had amused and had bored him. But it never had flattered him. For the quality of her liking, her friendship, her kindness, King-lo loved Miss Julia. But for no one else in Christendom had he ever felt any affection, until something of that feeling suddenly had sprung in him as he sat alone in the dining-room with Sir Charles Snow.

This young Chinese was as little given to sudden likings as the slow-to-decide Englishman was. But there are affinities of manliness and of tastes that brook no delay, that defy barriers. And the quick and sure Chinese intuition of the younger man had leapt to Snow's worth and congeniality almost on the instant.

Now and then, across the stretch of East and West, there are hands that touch, and having touched, clasp.

Sên King-lo did not like Miss Gilbert—the girl with the Chinese-like flower names—the less because she was Charles Snow's cousin, or that the cousinly bond between them so evidently was strong and close.

One thing, at least, Sên disliked in his new girl-acquaintance: the little she seemed to care for her small cousins. He had not seen her with them—or seen them at all—and he hoped her indifference to them was merely a verbal barrage to screen and defend from a stranger, a sentiment too exquisite to be shown to a passing acquaintance, above all not to one whom she disliked. He hoped that—for the sake of his new ride-born liking of her—but he rather doubted it. He thought her pluck was more than her artifice; her indifference had rung true enough. And to his Chinese thinking even the slight ailment that kept her little cousins prisoners in their own rooms would have been sufficient excuse for the kinswoman, who had an almost maternal office over them, to have denied herself to him altogether this morning, and have sent him and his horse away from the door. They might be suffering, the poor little tender things—and yet she had laughed and galloped, and her color had deepened joyously, and her brown eyes sparkled care-free and happy. Was she callous?

All Chinese adore all children. Nothing else in our West so repels them as that there are among us some that do not.

He hoped he was wrong—she had seemed fond of her horse.

When he had tubbed again, Sên had his lunch-chop and hock alone. Washington is as "dry" now as an autumn leaf in drought-time, of course; and was then. But there still are cellars in Washington. In his own house a man, and his guests, may do as he likes with his own. It seems unlikely to be so long, but it is measurably so now. And the Chinese Legation had its cellar—a very good cellar, though rarely broached except

on "guest-nights"; and Sên had its freedom. He would not have bought hock now, imported since 1914. He did not relish Colonial wines. But the hock that had been bought and paid for—he feared it had been paid for—before the War, he drank and enjoyed.

It was no new thing for Sên to eat alone. For so popular and courted a man, he spent a great deal of time in his own nook—his oak well-sported. And for so busy a man, he seemed to have, or to make himself, a great deal of leisure.

To be alone, and to be at leisure rather frequently, was a necessity of his Chinese being. He spoke three European tongues idiomatically, and almost without accent. He spoke English so well that when he did, he thought in English. A very rare and delicate feat that! He could do most things that Englishmen could do, and some of them he did better than many Englishmen could. His Western on-growths were genuine and vigorous. But they all were graftings. No sap of them had permeated backwards into the trunk or core of his nature. In all of them some Chinese sap flowed and tinged. Sên King-lo was thoroughly Chinese—as essentially Chinese as if he never had left the Ho-nan home of his birth. It is in solitude, communing with self, communing more with Nature, that every Chinese takes his spiritual ease, has his spiritual growth, leads his intensest, truest life. It is then that he lives—even more than when he sits with his hand on his mother's girdle, or his children's hands on his skirt. Except the most toil-stunted of the working-class, every Chinese must be alone sometimes, or perish. And even the work-driven coolie, who labors and toils and reeks in his sweat almost from dawn to dawn, snatches a soul-breather now and then, alone with his pipe, or a growing

flower, a bamboo clump, a rushing river's bank, a bird on a bough. He must.

A Chinese criminal on his way to the indescribable execution ground, will lag a moment to buy a flower, and sniff at it joyously, as he trudges on to his hideous death. Give any Chinese child its choice between a toy and a graceful spray of sweet-scented honeysuckle, invariably it takes the blossoms.

And every Chinese—young or old, rich or poor—knows how to be alone, makes solitude a dignity, and gives it charm, and reaps from it—much.

Sên King-lo did not go out again that day or evening.

When he had lunched—he had called at the florist's on his way home, and had written his note to Lady Snow at his club, before he went to New Hampshire Avenue—he curled up on a divan with a book—poems that Po-Chii-i had written eleven hundred years ago. He read slowly and steadily—pausing to dream now and then—reading many verses over and over—while the pleasant noises of Washington droned unheeded in at his wide-open window, and he did not lay Po-Chii-i's old singing aside till Kow Li brought in his tea: true Chinese tea that can be bought in no Western shop. But Sên made no ceremony of his tea-drinking, though it cost him neither cream nor sugar. And he munched a toasted, buttered muffin and two plump éclairs to the last crumb.

When Kow Li had cleared away the small tea-service, Sên sat, until it was time to change for dinner, almost without moving in his easy-chair—and thought. It's a Chinese habit—the breath of the Chinese mind. A Chinese must meditate—or die. Even the babies, and the shrill-tongued babbling women, meditate in China.

"Where there is no vision the people perish."

Though he was dining alone in his own sitting-room, Sên dressed for dinner as scrupulously as if he'd been an English subaltern alone in a remote dâk bungalow about to dine off half-roasted but wholly grown goat and undergrown plantains, washed down by criminal and luke-warm beer. There was not a little of the English gentleman in Sên King-lo, not a few English characteristics, habits and traits that in no way clashed with Chinese—or that were Chinese as well. And there were a number of Western superficialities that he preferred to their Eastern substitutes. He not only liked silver forks better than he did ivory chop-sticks, and glass finger-bowls better than a steaming wet towel, and preferred mattress, blankets, sheets and soft pillows, to a mat and a hard cylinder pillow—though in England, and when well dog-tired after a hunting day, he more than once had sat up all night, in protest against the feather-bed his hostess had assigned to him—but he had grown so accustomed to English clothes that he no longer realized how much more comfortable, and in most ways preferable, were the men's garments of old Pekin.

With his after-dinner cigarette, Sên remembered the confession he'd promised to make—in a book. Where was it? Kow would know, and when Sên rang, Kow did.

Sên made himself very comfortable in his biggest arm-chair, and leisurely studied the book. In a way, it proved better worth the trouble than confession-books often do. Ivy had passed it about with discrimination. A number of distinguished men, and one or two such women, had written in it; notables whose acquaintance she had owed, no doubt, to Sir Charles. As he read and studied, Sên grew really interested. His "mea culpa" was going into uncommonly good-fellowship.

There was not a nobody there! Unless Miss Gilbert herself was "no one." Certainly Julia Calhoun Townsend was not even remotely a nobody. And almost every other name signatured there was known and reputed beyond both the width and the length of the Potomac.

He smiled reverently at Miss Julia's spidery tellings —and read them twice for their perfume of a sweet and aromatic personality. Ivy's own "confession" was naïve and girlish—written several years ago on the birthday the book had been given her. But it surprised even more than it interested him. It interested him even more than he knew. His browsing of it outlasted an entire cigarette; and Sên smoked slowly. Yes, the girl was interesting, and very much more intelligent than he had supposed. He wondered if many English girls of sixteen—the book told him that she'd been sixteen when she received it six years ago—were so intelligent and so out of the ruts. He looked at the date her "confession" gave, and he made a mental note of it. Then he thought better of that, and penciled a note on his cuff. But what surprised him most—and it amused him—was that several of her answers were identical with those he'd write in a few moments—if he wrote quite truly. So Grieg was her favorite composer as well as his own. There were several pastimes that he cared for even more than he did riding. But Velasquez and Turner were his favorite painters—of Western ones. Miss Gilbert could not be expected to have heard of Ma Yuen—much less to have seen even one of his silks. And he too preferred Thackeray to Dickens. Lemon-yellow was the color that too pleased him most. The harp was also his favorite instrument. Spain was not the country he most wished to see—for he had seen Spain, had spent almost a year there. What she most disliked was vul-

garity and disloyalty. That was true of him. He thought best of the living reigning monarch of whom she did. Really—the thing was a little ridiculous. She liked prose better than she did poetry—well, that was one escape. And there were other safety-valves.

He rose with a light laugh, and carried the telltale volume to his writing-table—a table of hybrid impedimenta; for Sên King-lo usually brushed the letters he wrote to China; and he had no intention of forgetting to write his own language in the old Chinese way in which Tu Fu and Li T'ai Po and his own father had written it.

He found his vacant pages; a pair that followed a pair, and dipped his brush in the ink. And when he also had written in English and the last page was dry, he closed the book, and strolled to the still-open window. He'd send Kow Li with the book tomorrow. He had kept it long enough.

"What a woman wants, she wants quickly. Only men have the strength to wait." Which of the philosophers had said that? Odd, he'd forgotten—but he had. Kow should carry the book back tomorrow, and ask for news of Lady Snow's hurt, and of her children's colds. He wished he had not sent those tea-roses today. Lilies-of-the-valley were her favorite flowers—a flower she never had seen was his. He'd like to send her valley lilies with her book. But you couldn't send tea-roses one day and lilies-of-the-valley the next. Bother those roses!

He wondered if Miss Gilbert would ride with him again. He hoped so. But the next time, if there was one, should be fully as much her doing as his. That was only fair to her. Sên King-lo had neither wish nor willingness to push any woman's inclination—not even

Miss Julia's, whose proved warm friendship gave him some license—least of all that of a girl who had no great liking for him or his company. But he wondered if she would pave the way for him to ask if they might go again. He hoped so. And a very slight and delicate pavement would do.

He strolled back from the window, and sat up till nearly daylight puzzling over a game of chess he was playing with a friend in Siangtan. But first he copied the date on his cuff into a notebook.

Kow Li did not go to Massachusetts Avenue the next day.

More ciphered cables come to Washington than those that are sent from Downing Street and Whitehall or Threadneedle and Lombard Streets. A disquieting cable came from Pekin to Sên King-lo as he breakfasted, and he forgot all about Miss Gilbert's confession-book.

CHAPTER XIV

FROM East and from West the sea-covered wires ran with alarm and twanged with suspense for a week or more. Something like international crises threatened, and quivered the diplomatic air. Officials were suspiciously polite to those of other countries, and spoke to those of their own in crisp, bothered sentences. And the press in a dozen countries girded its loins, strained its ears, sharpened its imaginations, and looked carefully to its ink-wells.

Then the small "affair" passed—as happily sometimes it does—and Washington shook itself good-humoredly as after some spring drizzle that had had more notice than it deserved, but had done no particular harm; and got

back to play—cotillions, tennis and moonlit river picnics.

And Sên found time to call on Lady Snow, and found her alone.

She was glad to see him, and said so.

"I am fortunate to find you at home this tempting day," he returned. "You are quite well again?"

"Perfectly, thanks. It was nice of you to send twice to ask. You are about the only man who has troubled whether we were dead or alive—my ankle and me—these last ten days. I've scarcely seen a soul; and Sir Charles has about lived at the silly old Embassy—and not heard what I've said half the time when he has been here. And I suppose you have too; it was nice of you to think to send to ask after the kiddies and me."

"But I could not forget to do that."

"Couldn't you? Several—that we've known longer than we have you—could. You've been desperately busy and excited, of course?"

"I'm a very small fish in the international sea—calm or troubled," her guest insisted. "I wonder if you will let me——"

"Please, no!" his hostess cried, dramatically, her hands over her ears. "I know that you and Japan, and poor little Korea—you ought to be well ashamed of yourselves, both of you, for the way you've played battledore and shuttlecock with Korea—have been hoping to cut each other's throats—but you cut lower down than throats, don't you?"

"On occasions," Sên admitted.

She gave him no time to say more, but caught her breath up where it had failed her—"and Germany planning to murder us all in our beds again, and Switzerland having the army photographed——"

"Miniatured, I should think," he interjected.

"—and all the rest of it. But I decline to hear any details. I hate the lot of you. Why can't you sit still, and be good, this terrifically hot weather? I'm desperately tired of State secrets."

A white line gleamed between Sên's lips. He had no intention of pressing Legation or Consulate secrets on Lady Snow, and he did not believe that Sir Charles surfeited her with State secrets.

"I should not have presumed to make that appalling blunder," he said. "I was going to say that I wondered if you would let me see your children, Lady Snow. May I?"

He saw the flippancy fall from her face as snow fades in a sudden deluge of sunshine.

"You would like to see Dick and Blanche? Truly? I like you, Mr. Sên. Of course, you shall see them! And the dear little monkeys are worth seeing and knowing. I'm very proud of my babies; and I've a right to be. But not today. They're gone to Rosehill with my cousin. Charlie's at the Embassy, of course. He half promised to get home for tea—but he won't! Just look at that clock. Do ring! We'll have ours now. Dawson ought to have brought it ages ago. But probably I told them not to, until I rang—Sir Charles said he might come."

Sên King-lo lingered a courteous length of time, after his second cup of tea. He took sugar and cream in it here. Lady Snow paid nearly two dollars a pound for her tea, but Sên King-lo thought that all such tea needed all the sugar and cream it could get.

Sir Charles did not come. Sên left a greeting for him, reminded Lady Snow of his wish to meet her children, repeated his pleasure at having seen her again, and went away.

He did not go home, or to his club. He crossed the

Potomac. He had not seen Miss Townsend for several days; and not only she allowed him to call at any odd hour; but he knew that she liked him to do that. So, late as it was, and far afield, he went from Massachusetts Avenue to Rosehill.

"Yes, sar," Uncle Lysander told him, his mistress was at home and certain sure he could go in—Lysander knew his standing orders, and knew better than to disobey them. But Dr. Elenore Ray caught a sultry tone in the old black's voice as he announced at the open drawing-room door that "Mr. Swing"—an impertinence of mispronunciation in which he indulged himself now and then—"has done come to see you, Miss Julia, ma'am."

"Have you lost your watch, or come to supper?" Miss Julia demanded bitingly. But her bright old eyes welled with welcome.

"Both!" Sên instantly lied.

"I suppose I shall have to give you your supper, then," she complained—Miss Julia was in highest good humor. "I'm not sorry to see you," she added. "I want you to know Dr. Elenore Prescott Ray. Elenore, may I present my friend, Mr. Sên King-lo?"

And Sên, having bowed, looked down at the face of the woman seated near Miss Townsend—a wonderful face, he thought; the finest, sweetest, and strongest face he ever had seen.

It was.

"We have been having a delightful afternoon, Mr. Sên," Dr. Ray told him. "A children's party. It has just gone home. I wasn't invited. It was in full swing when I chanced to call. You have only just missed it."

The telephone bell rang in the hall, and Miss Julia rose and left them. She was not in the telephone book.

She looked coldly on telephones, as on a number of other and even more modern inventions, but she found hers useful in speaking to Washington tradesmen; and usually she answered and used it herself—Uncle Lysander was sickly afeared of the 'phone, and Dinah, her next most trusted servant, at the 'phone could do nothing but giggle into the receiver.

Her other guest turned to Sên with a pleasant smile that lit up her face, almost without moving it—chiefly a smile in her fine clear eyes.

"I have known Miss Townsend since we were very small girls, but I saw a new side of my old friend today. It was very charming to hear her telling stories to the mites who were here. She did it delightfully. I can't tell you how they loved it. And how she loved doing it! It was touching."

"Very," said Sên gently.

Elenore Ray gave him a scanning look, and, at something she read there, he had made her his friend. But she only said quietly—for she, too, was a sash-wearer—"They were nice children—the tots that were here."

"*Very* nice children," Miss Julia emphasized, catching the last words as she came—it had been a wrong-number call—"they do their mother and their governess great credit. Well-behaved children are a true refreshment in these mad days."

"I," the physician laughed, "find naughty children a tonic."

"I do not," Miss Julia said sadly.

"I do!" her friend repeated. "And I make more money out of them. You see, I am an avaricious doctor, Mr. Sên."

Sên laughed. "Was it a large party, Madame?" he asked.

"Quality and not quantity," Miss Julia answered. "I wish you had come earlier."

"I wish I had," Sên King-lo replied.

"You'd have made us the even half-dozen. We were an odd number—five."

"Why count me?" Dr. Ray asked. "I was but a looker-on in Venice."

"Only two children—but such nice little things," Miss Julia told Sên. "The Snows' boy and girl. Their cousin brought them to spend the day with me. You remember her, don't you? Miss Gilbert? She stayed the night of the garden party."

"Oh, yes, I remember Miss Gilbert."

"Didn't you like her?" Miss Townsend demanded abruptly. She had caught the reserve in his tone; so had Dr. Ray and had interpreted it differently.

"Could I say so?" he asked gaily. "But I do like Miss Gilbert—very much."

His hostess looked at him a little regretfully. She liked those she liked to like each other—and she had mistrusted his tone. But Dr. Ray threw him a shrewder glance. She, too, mistrusted his tone, and her mistrust took a different trend. Able in all her craft, diagnosis was her forte. She rarely erred in it. It was a great physician, the slender patrician that almost lounged, so assured and easy her sitting, in Miss Townsend's great-grandfather's favorite chair, a long history of sorrow and service carved on the face in which time and life had cut many, but only beautiful lines. Soft waves of snow covered a graceful, queenly-held head, and the long, thin hands, lying loosely on the great chair's big arm-knobs, were as masterful as they were lovely — the polished finger-nails as rosy and mooned as a girl's. She was a great physician, adding

distinction to the profession it had cost her a hard, bitter fight—and sometimes a tortured one—to enter. But the physician armed with a genius for absolute diagnosis should not find professional greatness too far or too difficult a cry. She gave Sên King-lo a long steady look.

"You don't know the Snows, do you?" Miss Julia asked him—more to retreat from a *cul-de-sac* she felt a trifle rasped than because she cared to know.

"Yes, Madame, I do—Sir Charles and his wife. I have not had the pleasure of meeting the small ones yet."

"Oh—yes—I suppose you diplomatic-staff people all know each other, more or less, whether you care to or not."

"We are apt to meet."

"And I daresay you know every one in Washington now," Julia remarked, rather purringly. She was proud of the place her once cold-shouldered protége had gained in the capital's society that she herself rather scorned.

"I know a good many." And this time Dr. Ray thought that there was nothing forced in the indifference of his tone.

"Do you like *them*—the Snows?" Miss Julia questioned again. It was her habit, and Sên's delight, that she always questioned him as she liked.

"Very much," he told her cordially.

"I like him," Miss Townsend said, with no uncertain emphasis on the pronoun.

Sên King-lo sprang to the defense of an absent woman on whose face he but now had seen maternity's beautiful blazon. "I like Lady Snow, Madame," he remarked. "I am sure there is a great deal more in her than the *chic* prettiness that one sees and the gay banter one hears."

"Do you?" From any one else the slight but patrician

sniff would have sounded a rudeness. "I," she continued, "*know* that there is very much more in Ivy Gilbert than shows on the surface. I am very fond of Ivy. I wish she had a gayer time. Girls should be gay. You liked Ivy, Elenore, didn't you?"

"Yes, I liked her," the other said promptly. "And I like her face."

"I like all of her," loyal Miss Julia insisted. "I shall ask the children here again. You must come, too, Mr. Sên."

"Gladly. I asked Lady Snow today to let me see them. But, of course, she could not."

"Because they were here. And that is why you came so late—when you knew they'd be gone! You must be anxious to meet them! So—you know Lady Snow well enough to call!"

"I was not sure they would be gone, Madame," Sên said a little lamely.

"Humph!" Miss Julia commented.

Dr. Ray smiled at the carpet.

"I wish—yes, Lysander, we are coming," for Lysander was bowing and grinning in the doorway, "I wish Ivy had a gayer time," Miss Julia repeated as she led the way to the dining-room. "Every girl has a right to have a good time. As nice a girl as Ivy Gilbert has a right to a great deal of fun and gay good times. They need it," she sighed softly, and Sên thought she looked sadly across her garden as they passed the hall's wide windows. Her own girlhood had been defrauded of its gaiety-right—robbed by war's seared and shriveled aftermath.

No pleasanter meal-time passed in Washington that night than passed at Miss Julia's supper-table. The odd trio proved as congenial as it was odd. Of the two

Southern women, one since babyhood had passed all her life here and a stone's throw from here, and had lived all of it as her foremothers had lived in the old regnant Virginia days. The other was traveled, experienced, steeped in life's up-and-downs, scarred and made taut by its jolts, chiseled fine by its jars, broadened and perfumed by the sacrifices it had called upon her for, and by the unfailing dignity and soul-loyalty, the supreme personal courage with which she never failed to make the sacrificial payment. Both the women wore time's diadem of soft snow above their clear, clean foreheads, and God's love in their hearts, God's fellowship in their souls—one with the mind of a man and the heart of a woman, a woman of the world, chastened and puissant, a creature of dignity and of enormous force and charm; the other changed in little—in little that counts—from her earliest girlhood, a child still in much, as full of prejudice as she was of goodness and sweetness. Both caught now the slow music his scythe made as the Reaper garnered the human grain down by the cold, dark river. The man—an alien Chinese, far from the home he loved, was at ease here, as everywhere, but never at home, never to be at home save in the home of the wild white rose—still in his youth, ginger hot in his mouth, the cup as yet but just to his lip, his fight to come, his spurs to win, his soul girded but still very young, vowed to a cause some thought already lost—well, they too had seen their cause lost, their flag torn—never soiled—in defeat. He was seeking and striving for victory's crown; one of them knew—for she had won and wore it—that defeat has the greater crown.

Dr. Ray was much interested to meet Sên King-lo, and to see and consider him in this easy, intimate way. She

had known many Chinese—but not before a Chinese gentleman.

Almost greedy still, in her splendid, beautiful ageing, for new experiences, more and still more knowledge, she welcomed this experience and made her most of it.

Dr. Elenore Ray liked Sên King-lo. She liked his simplicity; a woman, she more than liked his deference; she liked his pleasant dignity, his unaffected repose, his good-humored reserve, and her quick, brilliant mind caught and rejoiced at the brilliance and quickness of his.

They talked more than they ate, at the well-spread and tempting table—they talked long and late on the porch afterwards.

Once Sên consulted the watch he had claimed to have lost, and turned to Dr. Ray and mentioned the hour. "May I serve you?" he asked.

"Not by seeing her home," Julia answered. "She's staying the night. I don't see her so often that I let her go soon when she does come. And you need not go yet."

But when she thought it was time for Sên King-lo to go, she said so; and he went.

"A very interesting man," was Dr. Ray's comment, as they heard the front door close. "I am very glad to have met him."

"Sên King-lo called today," Lady Snow told her husband at dinner that night. "He left regards and all that for you, Charlie, and he was perfectly sweet about the children. I think he came specially to see them—and he's coming again. He was so disappointed that they were out. But, Ivy, he did not ask after you. I thought it so odd. Did you treat him badly the other day?"

"What day?"

"When you rode together."

"Oh—then! No, I don't suppose I did. For I had an exceptionally pleasant time, and I mean him to take me again."

"Which, in my opinion, he will not, if you snub him," Emma said sagely.

"Oh," Ivy laughed, "I sha'n't trouble to do that again. It isn't worth it, and he rides too well."

"He does most things well," Sir Charles observed.

CHAPTER XV

THE next day but one Sên sent back Miss Gilbert's "confession-book," and with it a boxful of lilies-of-the-valley. He sent no message, no note, not even a card. But the flowers and the book were under one cord-tied cover.

They came in the early morning, and Ivy wondered what florist's he'd found open so early—until she glanced at her clock, and saw that it lacked little of ten. She had danced until three, and had breakfasted in bed—the children being excused from "school" today.

She heaped the lilies out on the coverlid beside her, and opened the book. How queer the Chinese writing looked! Heathenish—but picturesque—beautiful, even, she finally decided. Then she turned the leaf and read and reread the English translation. One question that he had answered in Chinese, he had left unanswered in English: "What is your favorite woman's name?" But, of course, his favorite woman's name was a Chinese name—and could not be translated into English. She turned back and studied the Chinese character. It was exquisitely made, she thought—almost as if the man's

hand and his brush had lingered tenderly over it. Was it a sweetheart's name? No—it couldn't be, for he never had so much as seen a Chinese girl—he'd said so that first night at Miss Julia's—and it had stuck in her memory because it had struck her Western mind as at once the most absurd and the most preposterous thing she had ever heard.

She wondered what this name he most liked sounded like. She'd ask Charles to read it aloud to her. Probably Charlie didn't pronounce Chinese with impeccable Chinese accent, but she knew that he spoke that language —or had spoken it some years ago—and no doubt he could read it a little. She'd like to hear how that funny looking little name sounded. It must be a short name—with just one character—that was what they called them, she thought—in its writing: a chubby little name, if its "character" at all depicted it—but neither unpretty nor ungraceful, for delicate curves—almost hair-lines one or two—crossed and jutted out daintily from its fat thicker sweeps of the brush. How unlike English writing this Chinese writing was! Strange that inked makeshifts for spoken words, so unlike as these that Mr. Sên had written in Chinese and those he'd written in English were, could stand for the same things, convey the same meanings! But did they? Were Chinese thoughts and English—hearts, minds, emotions—in anyway one? The man she had ridden with the other day had seemed so little un-English to her! And he had found her a little Chinese—that first night at Miss Julia's. Could hands of the West and hands of the East meet now and then, after all, in grip not altogether Eurasian and flabby? How interesting it all was! And she'd never given it a thought before! How full of wonderful things the world was—and life!

She stretched comfortably up on her pillows, and gathered a mass of the exquisite flowers up to her face. Her soft hair lay loose about her, clouding the cambric and torchon of her pretty nightgown, perfuming her hair and her dimpled chin. Like all women who care for clothes in the nicest way, care for the sense of soft fabric on soft skin, for the beauty of texture and tint and line, for the clothes for the sake of the reflection they give of a personal daintiness and taste, and not for what they "show," Ivy, obliged to skimp, skimped on outer garments that others saw, rather than on those that only she and her mirror ever saw, those that touched her intimately. Being young and raw she often was ashamed of coat and skirt, or of dance frock less fresh and good than were those of other girls, but she would have felt a grosser shame to put coarse, roughly-trimmed calico against her skin, which being sensible and not blind, she knew deserved its first sheath of covering to be as nearly delicate as loom and needle could contrive. It was a very pretty nightgown.

The bedclothes were both costly and beautiful. Emma Snow was house-proud. And she was too nice a woman, and too proud in the best sense, to house her husband's girl cousin less well than she did herself. This—the girl's own room—less crowded than Emma's luxurious own, was not less well furnished or carefully appointed.

It was a pretty picture—the room and the girl in the bed.

She yawned happily and cuddled her lilies against her face. One spray slipped from her hand, and lay inside the lace of her gown. The morning sun came in rose through the window. And the rose in the girl's brunette face answered it, coming and going at her musing thoughts, with the trick of rose ebb and flow that was so

constant on her face, and was half its charm—rarely a blush, but always a beauty. Her soft, dark hair, all perfumed by the lilies' sweetness, rippled over her pillows, and shadowed her throat. One hand nursed lilies-of-the-valley, and so did her cheek—one hand lay on the open confession-book, her filbert nails lying pink on a page of Chinese characters.

Ivy Gilbert was a very pretty girl—more than pretty—face and body had considerable loveliness, but her hands were her paramount beauty, as hands always are, in every race, in the woman whose loveliness is Nature's deliberate achievement, and not just happily accidental.

Did lilies-of-the-valley grow too in China—the flowers she loved most? And their perfume was always an intoxicant to her. Did they grow in China? She'd ask Charles—or Mr. Sên. Mr. Sên who had not asked after her the day before yesterday. Why should he? How silly Emma was! "King-lo"—what a "given" name!

"Lo," she said aloud—not very loud—and giggled softly at the sound, so much less like a man's given name than "Tom" or "Roger" or "Rupert." "Lo!" And yet—and yet—what about "Llewellyn" and "Silas" and "Jonas"? She knew a charming man here in Washington whose name was "Silas." She rather thought that she'd prefer to call her brother—if she had one—"Lo" to calling him "Silas" or "Llewellyn" or "Jonas." And "Heinrich"! Yes—she certainly'd rather own to a brother "Lo" than to a brother "Heinrich." "Sên"—"Sên" wasn't so bad, really it wasn't. She thought it a far nicer name than "Watkins" or "Snider" or "Green" or "Pink" or "Higginbotham." "Lo." "Jo." "Jo"—she was rather fond of "Jo"—much as she disliked "Joseph." There were quite a lot of English names she disliked. There was not much

difference between "Lo" and "Jo"—very little difference indeed. "Jo" was the nicer, of course—it sounded more masculine, and it looked so. But—after all——

She drew the book nearer, and turned a page. How well this new Chinese acquaintance—whom Charlie liked so much—wrote English. *And* you could read it! It was a " 'varsity hand"—but perfectly legible, which so many 'varsity handwritings were not. It had all their hall-marks—the Greek *e's,* the quickness and smallness, the nice absence of flourish. But it had individuality, and such courteous clearness! How English it was! It seemed almost impossible that the man who wrote it was not English. She turned back a page, and looked hard and long at the Chinese signature—giggling again at the ridiculousness it looked to her. Charlie said her giggle was like a Chinese girl's! Well—what if it was? Probably many Chinese girls were very nice—and were charming. She liked Mr. Sên. The girls here in Washington were silly about him—and odious. But she liked him in a sensible, straightforward way—as a sensible, straightforward, and very interesting acquaintance. It seemed funny for a man to have such small and delicate hands, but when he had swung her up to her saddle she had felt his hand rock-sure and steel-strong under her foot and her weight. How beautiful her lilies were—and how sweet!

The girl and her flowers made a pretty picture, as she lounged there—even Chinese eyes must have thought so, could they have seen her all rumpled, but dainty, as she lay there in her bed, thinking thoughts she little knew, one hand holding the sweet flowers to her face—the blue eiderdown heaped with them and their long green leaves —one hand resting on a Chinese confession.

CHAPTER XVI

FROM then they were thrown together almost constantly—not by others, but by circumstances and social accidents. And both to her surprise and to his—more to his than to hers—their acquaintance rapidly grew into friendship. It was nothing freakish, it was comradeship direct and unsilly. They met often, and knew that they liked each other, and liked to be together. They soon knew that they liked each other, but had no realization of how much. Sên King-lo suspected it first. Their divergences were a zest. And they had much in common, and that made between them a bond. Each was lonely—Ivy sometimes, King-lo almost always. Each was an alien, apart in an alien place. Each was at once homesick and homeless. Each found refreshment and tonic in the other. There were English traits and Chinese surprises in Sên, and personality that attracted her strongly. They had a score of English experiences in common. They were a boon to the homesick girl. The girl was virginal, and that attracted greatly the man of a people who cherish and reverence only one quality—maternity—more intensely than they do virginity. He knew that her friendliness had in it nothing mawkish. And in the wholesomeness of their friendship, and the wholesomeness and manliness of the man, Ivy quite forgot her first cheap desire to pique the girls who "ran after" him not too nicely. She was glad that Charles and Miss Julia valued Sên so highly, and she gave no more care or thought to what any one else thought or said of her new camaraderie. Not greatly educated, the English girl was beautifully intelligent: that attracted Sên King-lo even more than it at first surprised him.

They liked and disliked many of the same things. They shared many prejudices. He was grateful to her for being beautiful, and for a hint of his own race now and then in eyes, gesture and voice. She was grateful to him for being always deferential, and often amusing, always companionable and interesting, and for his dependability to know whether Eton or Harrow had won at Lords, whether Surrey or Middlesex was at the top of the cricket average, and all about every stroke Oxford and Cambridge had made from Putney start to Mortlake finish.

The girl found the keener interest, the man stumbled into the stronger liking. But while she found no fault in him, he found a terrible fault in her, and it rankled his quickening and strengthening liking sorely; her indifference to all children, even to her own little cousins. The opal owes its loveliness and its lure to its flaw. The Chinese soul of Sên King-lo could see nothing but deformity and disease in the slightest flaw that even specked a girl's womanliness. It grieved him that a girl who, he knew, attracted him more each time they met did not care for little children. He held it an enormity; it rankled and it bit.

Inside another month, all Washington—the "four hundred"—knew that Mr. Sên and Miss Gilbert had become—to put it nicely—"great friends." A few were disgusted, most were amused, and not a few were jealous: Reginald Hamilton and a few dozen women.

In all the antipathetical bewildering psychology of East and West there is nothing more baffling than the lure of European women to Asiatic men. Know the East longest, search it most tirelessly, grow most in sympathy with it, and still you can see but darkly and not far into that inter-racial puzzle and secret of human nature.

The average and the typical men of the Orient are

excellent husbands—polygamous?—granted. But what of their women? The "rights" the men denied their wives for centuries of centuries those wives would have resented as insult, spurned as outrage and burden. It is not facile to enfranchise a race, a caste or a sex that will have none of it. Even in Earth's "freest" country you may coax, or lead or prod a woman to the polling-booth, but you can't make her vote. Not yet. And in this new day of our greatest enlightenments when enfranchisement is peeping seductively over the shoulders of Oriental women, it is those women who hang back and hesitate, not their husbands and masters who hold them back or coerce them. The Oriental husband is not a tyrant. His wives rule and coerce him oftener than he does one of them. He locks them up in some places, and in some castes. They'd berate and punish him if he did not. The most ruthless ruler Afghanistan ever has had could not control or direct his favorite wife. She over-sat, she over-ate, and she over-smoked very badly indeed. Her physicians protested and warned. The Amir was thoroughly frightened, greatly distressed. He cajoled, he pleaded, he bribed with the moving bribery of pearls and jeweled tissues and thick perfumes, and it is reported that at least twice he wept. But the result was nothing. His wife laughed and pouted and scoffed and defied and calmly and obstinately lolled, ate sweetmeats, and smoked herself to obesity and death.

The Chinese man who launders undergarments and table linen or barters *chop suey* in Chicago or St. Louis, living in a dearth of Chinese women, marries an American wife and makes her an admirable and a generous husband. The Chinese merchant in the Straits Settlements chooses a wife from any one of a score of non-Chinese races, and they jog on together most comfortably,

and he lets her rule such of their life and hours as are mutual far more than he, although in intelligence, education and principles she is his inferior, and he knows it. Chinese men of education, of some natural taste and refinement, and with ideals and sterling personal worth sometimes "take in washing" for a profession, but American women of commensurate qualities do not marry them. The Eastern man is proud of his woman, admires her and is satisfied with her and her ways. He guards and he pampers her more often than not—unless he's a Japanese—the Parsi, the Sikh, the Chinese, the Burmese (*he has* to) the Cingalese, the Hindoo, yes, and the strict Mohammedan too! And every Eastern man regards the "white" races as inferior to his own, is convinced that they are, and looks down upon them. He does not find Westerners companionable, he does not find them handsome or beautiful. He dislikes their customs, abhors their dress, and despises their creeds. And he loathes their food. Why, then, the desire of the Oriental for a European (and the blonder the better) mistress or wife? It seems inexplicable. But it *is*. The fact remains. More than one ruler of an "independent" Indian State has married a European of rougher birth, less education, more inferior mind, uncouther manners than his own, and imperiled his throne and succession, even his life in doing it—and knowing that he did.

But in the attraction that Sên King-lo felt in this English girl there was no abnormality—unless the friendly touch of yellow and white hands is in itself abnormality. He had been educated in her country and in its ways. In much he *was* English. He not only could read, write and speak her language, but he could think in it—and often did. He had read more English books than she had, knew more English facts than she did—

and knew far more of the deeds, the years, and the thought that have made England. And between the typical English and the typical Chinese the difference is surprisingly small—and is mostly superficial: a matter of skin-tints and of bone-formation. There *is* a spiritual difference—we in England have not learned to repose on Nature, to merge in her as the Chinese do, and we reverence ancestry and old age less, guard childhood less loyally, less tenderly. But England grows—as America does—in all this. And if the race of Shakespeare and Shelley and Newman lives up less to its ideals, grasps them less and less generally than does the race of Han, the ideals of the two—at best—are the same. We—Anglo-Saxons and Celts—have less vision than the Chinese and its interknit and absorbed races have, but a gleam glows in the sky of the Occident—it peeps through the blanket of our dark. We are less insular than we were—some of us at least. The Oriental lectures—than which nothing in London is more worth having—at the School of Oriental Studies in Finsbury Circus are sparsely attended, but some of us do go, and come away grateful. The East always will be East—in spite of intermittent, ape-like freaks. Probably the crasser West always will be West. But the two may meet yet, concordant parts of one splendid whole.

The attraction of the Western woman for the Eastern man *in the West* is a simpler and a more normal thing than her attraction of him in the East. Debarred from the womanhood of his own race in London or New York, because there are no such women there, an Oriental's leaning towards an East-and-West marriage or intimacy has something of the humdrum quality of poor Hobson's narrowed choice.

Sên King-lo never had seen a Chinese girl!

Ivy Gilbert's attraction of Sên first and last was a matter of personality and of person.

Probably its next strength was a matter of caste. She seemed to him wholly and charmingly patrician. Sên King-lo—as many young Chinese have done ever since Wang-Ah Shih made an Empire and an Emperor ridiculous—believed himself to be "republican"; but he was not. He could not be. He saw in Ivy Gilbert the caste of his mothers—the ancestral women he worshiped. He saw in Ivy—a slip of English girlhood—the imperial feminine of a great, puissant, imperial people.

Republic, commonwealth, kingdom, democracy, empire—take your choice. There are things to be said of them all—they all have their points. You may not be able to choose an empire, if you're too long about it—so they say—well, we shall see, or our children's children will. Prophecy's a thankless, perilous pastime. And even the writing on the wall blunders sometimes. But this much is true; our old shifting Earth has but two empires left her now—China's and England's. Japan doesn't count—yet. It mixes and meddles, but in the ultimate soul bigness *it does not count*. And China's a republic you say? China is not—never has been and never can be, except in the fevered dreaming of a day of midsummer madness, the demented throes of a short nightmare; there are intrinsic qualities of peoples as of individual characters which no label can change. Under another name China may not be so comfortable a place to live in, but it is an empire still, disfigured, demented, but neither shattered nor lost—but not less than empire while the soul of the Sages, whom she wombed and who too begat her, breathes through the soul of her people, the poppies and bamboos hang at the edge of the Yellow Sorrow, and the silkworms gorge on the mulberry leaves and empurple

the looms. And while those twin empires stand—in so much alike, so much unalike—a something will show in many faces of two races' women which shows in no others. It is not distinction—though it often includes it; it is not courage—though it never lacks it; it is not flare or flame; it is not beauty; though never unfeminine it is not femininity; it is not dignity, though it never is cheap, it never asserts itself—it has no need to; it is not self-conscious; it is neither humble nor proud and yet it is both; it is neither virtue nor individuality; still less is it cant; it is empire—racial empire and personal empire: a part and a whole. A thing to admire? That's as you think. But while the wild white rose perfumes the graves of Li's ancestors, and the Augean goats browse by the graves of English boys in Gallipoli, that something will show in the faces of one type—the best type—of Chinese and English women. Ts'z-hi had it, and Ivy Gilbert, whatever medley her ancestry, undeniably had it, and the eyes of a Chinese man, who had been a sash-wearer for thousands of years, saw it and gloated. She wore it here in Washington; in the nursery schoolroom, in the ballroom or at Rosehill, as Ts'z-hi had worn it in the Vermilion Palace.

That Sên King-lo was attracted by Ivy Gilbert was not odd. That he attracted her, would be longer to explain, if one could—more intricate and difficult to trace. But he did. And her liking and friendliness turned to him in the good old hackneyed way that sunflowers have turned to the sun ever since Adam made the meanest and truest excuse in human history.

She tempted him—though he didn't know it yet.

Youth called to youth. Loneliness answered to loneliness. Sex called to sex.

CHAPTER XVII

EMMA SNOW took alarm first.

"Do you want Ivy to marry Sên King-lo?" she suddenly asked her husband one morning.

"Damn! Hell!" the phlegmatic Englishman cried hotly. He was shaving, and he'd cut himself rather badly. (He had a dressing-room of his own, and used it but rarely.) He sopped off the blood as well as he could, then flung about on his wife more angry and ruder than she ever had seen him.

"Don't be disgusting!" he snapped.

"I see what I see," she retorted smoothly.

"I decline to listen to preposterous, lying, nauseating vulgarity," Snow growled, his mouth twitching angrily. "Such a hideous idea never entered, or could, any head but yours."

"I see what I see," she repeated good-humoredly. She was sorry for Charlie.

"Blow what you see!" Rage, and perhaps a subconscious sick fear, obsessed him, made him forget himself in their torturing grip.

"Use your eyes!" his wife advised him more coldly. And, not unjustly incensed, she finished her own toilet in silence, and went down to the breakfast-room without a glance or a word more.

Dr. Ray saw it next.

The physician was still in Washington. Independent now of her large Chicago practice, she took more and more time each year for the travel and study she loved; and few years passed in which she did not make at least one stay of weeks, if not months, in Washington.

"Do you want pretty Miss Gilbert to marry Sên King-

lo?" she asked Miss Julia as they sat one morning at breakfast.

Miss Julia was furious. Her old hands trembled so that she dropped the cup she was lifting. It had been in the Townsends' possession only goodness and the gods of the South knew how long; and she didn't give it a look as it crashed in fragments on the floor, nor a glance to the pools of hot coffee staining the breakfast damask and her crisp morning-gown. She didn't say "Damn," and she didn't say "Hell"; but for all that, she answered her friend very much as Sir Charles Snow had answered his wife.

The physician took it in perfect good part. But she stood her ground.

"I can't help thinking that this is just what it is shaping towards, Julia."

"You are horrible," Miss Townsend moaned sickly. "It couldn't be."

"Why not?" Dr. Ray demanded gently.

Julia Townsend shrank back in her chair—speechless. She could not have been more surprised, dismayed, disappointed if Jefferson Davis had proved a traitor or Robert E. Lee disgraced his uniform—not half so much so if Mexico's gulf had submerged her beloved South. She felt soiled by the tongue of a friend.

"Why not?" Dr. Ray insinuated.

"Why not! Because the bare suggestion is abominable," Miss Julia exclaimed. "I'd *kill* Sên King-lo if I believed that he even could harbor the vile thought—which I know he could not."

"I do not believe that he has thought of it yet," Dr. Ray said, helping herself to the omelette Miss Julia made no motion to offer. "I am sure they have not thought of it yet—either of them. People usually marry first, and

think after, I've noticed. And I believe they will do it —marry each other."

Miss Julia, with a thin old hand that shook violently under its burden of gems, pushed a silver dish of fast-cooling sweetbreads farther afield, as if she feared the other might take food she'd grudge her. She did it automatically.

"They might do worse—perhaps," the guest said musingly. "But I know you wouldn't like it."

"My God!" Julia Townsend moaned. "And you—you a Southern woman! A *Southern* woman—and my friend! You used to be my friend!"

"I do not like it either," Dr. Ray said quietly—too true a physician to be incensed at nerves. "But, Julia, the world moves. We can't shut our eyes to that. At least, I can't."

Poor Miss Julia shuddered, a green shadow lay on her trembling mouth. She was nauseated, soul and body. But the physician went on, "cruel to be kind," as such physicians do:

"I know a very nice girl in Chicago who has married a Chinaman—several years ago it was. They are perfectly happy. He is kind and generous to her. He has a sort of delicatessen shop and curio shop mixed—food on one side, dishes and vases and Joss-sticks and Jacob's-ladders on the other. He works from dawn to dusk, and must be worth a good deal by this—but he never lets her do a hand's turn, and her silks and furs and rings —good rings—are a scandal. And their baby——"

"Hush!" Miss Julia ordered in a terrible voice. Her eyes were ablaze.

"But they both are peasants—at least she certainly is—and I often have wondered how such a marriage

would result between husband and wife, both of gentle birth. It would be very interesting——"

But Julia Townsend could bear no more. She covered her face in her coffee-sodden napkin and broke into sobs.

Elenore Ray shook her head sadly. If Julia took the uncorroborated hint like this, how would she take the accomplished fact—if it eventuated?

Emma Snow had warned Sir Charles; Dr. Ray had warned Miss Julia. Except that each had angered and disgusted, neither had made the slightest impression.

Sên King-lo came and went at the Massachusetts Avenue house and at Rosehill as before, and both Snow and Miss Julia scorned to notice how, or how often, he and Ivy spoke to each other. Dr. Ray held her peace and so did Lady Snow.

But that was more than Washington did. Would it be a match? Men made bets at the clubs, and women "Oh"-ed and "Ah"-ed and "My dear"-ed over tea-cups and cocktails—in Turkish Baths, and even in whispers at church. Had Sên King-lo been caught at last? Was he going to marry Ivy Gilbert? What did the Chinese Minister think about it?

That, the Chinese Minister did not state.

Washington is a gossipy place—it gossips in many languages, and from several angles. There is even more talk in Washington than there is in Simla. But Washington rarely had a more diverting theme than this. "Ivy Gilbert and Sên King-lo" were on every tongue. But, oddly enough, not a word of it had reached either. No thought of marriage, not even of "love," had occurred most remotely to the Chinese man or to the English girl.

But she wore his perfumed lily-bells now—and they came more and more often. And Emma Snow knew

what the florist himself could have told her, if she had not, that to no other woman, not even to Miss Julia, did Sên King-lo ever send lilies-of-the-valley. And the florist could have confirmed Lady Snow's belief that to no other girl did Sên King-lo ever send a flower. But the florist kept lips as close as the Chinese Minister's own. But while others guessed and wondered, the florist had not the slightest doubt of how it would end.

The friendship begun by a common aversion to kissing, a jade-green frock, and a bunch of dangling crimson peppers grew—and more than once it pulsed.

CHAPTER XVIII

EMMELINE HAMILTON lay on a pile of cushions heaped on the floor, one hand under her head, her knees hunched up in what she thought a Chinese attitude, a cigarette she tried to imagine was opium in her mouth, a purple kimono, embroidered with blue chrysanthemums and red and gold dragons and beetles and smaller bugs, flopped loosely about her. She flattered the garment that it was ultra-Chinese, but it was merely an atrocious libel on the women of Japan. It revealed an appalling stretch of her amazingly thin legs and not only all her neck, but much that lies below necks. But that was less exposure than it sounds—for Emmeline was built as chastely flat as her mother: except for her nose and ears there scarcely was a jut on Emmeline. She caved in here and there thinly, but she nowhere bulged. A Chinese woman, even one whose profession was frailty, would sooner have strangled or starved herself or have perished by slow suffering inches than have exposed any part of her neck. But Emmeline didn't know that. Her

mawkish but intense and tigerish infatuation for Sên King-lo was no greater than her ignorance of his people and their customs. Her furniture, which had cost enough to be good, was a poor imitation of inlaid teak-wood. The room was thick and sneeze-provoking with the smoke of joss-sticks that by chance *were* Chinese, which the prints and *kakemonos* on the walls were not, but the prints were good of their sort, and the costumes they showed were the garb of an older China—for Japan took her dress, as she's taken most she has that is best—from China centuries ago. The great gong that stood conspicuously and inconveniently in the middle of the room hailed from the Tottenham Court Road and had been made not far from that street of "Horse-Shoe" and furniture for cash or time-payment. A porcelain bowl of sweet-meats lay on the floor beside her, a pair of chop-sticks she simply could not learn to manipulate crossed above the chocolates and glacé fruits. She wore an oleander flower over one ear and a tiny orange-colored fan over the other. She was well hung with jade—such as it was—and the foot from which she had kicked its heelless sandal showed that she wore white stockings made like mittens, with separate compartments provided for flat great toes.

She had taken her flat for a year; and had furnished it, as she believed (and said), in an absolutely Chinese way. And she lived here alone with a maid old enough to be a duenna—but far too shrewd to attempt it.

Her brother sulked on a very uncomfortable stool—too high for feet—very much too low for one's legs to be conveniently or painlessly disposed of. Emmeline had been crying; her eyes were redder than her lightly rouged cheeks. Reginald looked thunderous. Each had close at hand a cocktail—larger than cocktails usually

are made. The Reginald's—he liked to be called so—was served in a champagne glass; Emmeline's in a small bowl which she called a Chinese wine cup—but Li Po himself never drank wine out of any vessel half so ample, for it was almost as large as a small afternoon tea-cup.

"I tell you it's true!" the girl sobbed, between a whiff and a sip.

"I'll not believe it!" Reginald liked the suggestion almost as little as Miss Julia had—and by it his personal vanity was stung, which Miss Julia Townsend's had not been. "That low Chink——"

Emmeline threw out a dramatic hand, scattering ash into the embossed scales of the purple kimono's handsomest dragon. "Not here!" she hissed. "No one that speaks with less than the deepest respect for Sên King-lo shall dare speak it here. He is Celestial!" and she sank back with an adoring moan on her prickly cushions—a stork's leg rasped her cheek—but she was too highly or abjectly Chinese to wince.

"Rot!" Reginald replied.

He turned to his cocktail; she pulled broken-heartedly at her cigarette. She had a pretty collection of tiny pipes—Chinese and otherwise—but, like the chop-sticks, they had mastered her, not she them. She industriously kept them conspicuous, but she couldn't manage to use them.

"Reggie," she said presently, "can't we help each other, you and I? Let's."

"How?" He spoke gloomily.

"We must think."

Reginald acquiesced—if he did—by discreet silence, and waited for his sister to do the thinking; a process more in her line than in his—as they both knew, though Reginald rarely referred to the fact. He had but two

gifts, beauty of person and splendor of raiment. Emmeline Hamilton was versatile and not without brains. Her silliness was a pose—his a reality and an emptiness. She affected asceticism and languor. He affected nothing but his surprising English accent. Even it he found no small strain and fatigue. If she had been born a boy, she might have attained to as successful and profitable a mountebankry as their father's. Success, except in an almost floral display of haberdashery, was not for Reginald de Courcy Hamilton.

"You want to marry her?"

"Yep." He rarely wasted his English *en famille.*

"You are determined? Perfectly? She hasn't a cent."

"I'm nothing of the sort. She won't have me."

"You've asked her?"

He nodded. No use not giving her the whole lay of the land, if she was to work her wits on it to advantage. But he wasn't going to dwell on that part of it.

"When?"

"What's that to do with it?"

"Probably everything. You answer; I'll do the asking. When?"

"Plenty of times," he muttered viciously.

"Since she's seen so much of Sên King-lo?"

"Sên King-lo be blowed! I tell you he has nothing to do with it."

"I tell you he has. Did you propose, the first time, since the last Rosehill garden party? It was there they met. Mary Withrow told me so. Was it after that that you proposed to Ivy Gilbert the first time?"

Reginald growled and nodded. His vanity was writhing. But as far as it was in him to care for any one but himself, he cared for Ivy Gilbert—and cared for her

somewhat surprisingly for one of his type and of his selfishness, since he wished to marry a penniless girl—which was precisely what he always had purposed never to do. He wanted Ivy. And, if Emmeline could help him to it, she'd have to have questions answered. He saw that.

Emmeline lit a fresh cigarette and lay with her pale eyes darkly fixed on the ceiling—hatching her plan.

"I have it! We must make him believe that she has jilted you."

"Thank you!" Gratitude could not have sounded more thankless.

"If she could be made to believe that I was engaged to him, or had been——"

"Look here, Em," her brother broke in hotly, "I won't listen to such disgusting rot. You engaged, even in fun, to a Chink! Don't you dare say such a thing again, even to me!"

Emmeline laughed thinly. There was little she did not dare do—Reg was the weaker vessel, quite without influence on the sister who, under a trailing, floppy affectation of languor, was an intensely vital young woman; and they both knew it. Their parents both consulted Emmeline frequently and usually followed her advice when they sought it. More than once she had had a strong finger in a sermon-pie of her father's.

"If I were engaged to Sên King-lo it wouldn't be in fun," she remarked with a hungry sigh.

"Stop it, I tell you!"

Miss Hamilton paid no attention to her brother's rising wrath—a nearer manliness than he often reached—and very little and cool attention to his words.

"I'd bring a breach-of-promise suit against him," she went on, "if I had one iota to go on. But I haven't. I

haven't a scratch of his pen. I've written him notes about all sorts of things, but he telephoned the skimpiest, formal answers—and rung off before I could get in three words. Sên King-lo has never danced with me," her words trailed off in a smothered wail.

Reginald Hamilton was too disgusted to speak. He stood up roughly and turned towards the door.

Emmeline rolled over on her big prickly cushions, face down on them, but head held up, chin on folded arms; and she fixed her brother with an imperious look from light, narrowed eyes.

"Sit down," she commanded. "I've got it! Sit down."

But for once Reginald Hamilton faced his manlier sister squarely. "I won't have you mixed up in it, Em. Anything else you like—but not your name mixed up with that Chink's."

Perhaps Emmeline recognized the affection that lay in his brotherly rage; for she said with another but not ill-natured sigh. "That's all right, old bean. It wouldn't work; so it isn't our game. But, I've got it! Sit down."

Reginald sat down.

CHAPTER XIX

AN ominous silence reigned in the schoolroom, and Ivy—just home from a fashionable wedding at St. Aloysius—looked cautiously in, to see what mischief the children were doing.

Sên King-lo sat on the floor, Blanche standing behind him, her chubby arms pinion-tight about his neck, her small fat hands clutched on his face. Dick sprawled at his knees, one of Dick's feet beating an ecstatic tattoo

on the man's suffering trousers, not to mention the possible pain to Sên's leg. All three were beaming with happiness. An array of toys, such as Ivy never had seen, strewed the floor, and Sên King-lo was making a procession of them as well as he could, pinioned and manacled by the excited youngsters: grotesque Chinese toys—animals that must have startled Darwin and Hudson—and a gorgeous sprinkling of dolls. The little clay animals bore a remarkable family resemblance, all were bright orange, handsomely embellished with generous circles of black, and the dragon looked as much like a tiger as it did like a dragon, the tiger as much like a dragon as it did like a tiger, the peacock—an orange and jet-black peacock—the cormorant and the duck looked triplets, the lion and ape and horse were fulsomely flattering imitations of each other. There were several imitation dwarf-trees, an ivory pagoda, a coolie-manned junk, a mandarin under his best umbrella, a toy-theater, all its actors complete, a peasant's mat hut, a buffalo working a water-wheel, a party of pig-tailed merchants playing dice, and drinking *samshu,* a lady with very small feet and a very large simper, quite a *créche* of babies—one on its *amah's* back—a monk and a be-fanned and parasoled warrior, a litter of picture-books, and a number of other playthings to which the astonished governess could fit no names.

The three on the floor looked up as Miss Gilbert stood in the door, and the two children frowned at the interruption. Sên rose with a smile, Blanche pendant on his back, strangling his neck, Dick clutched on one arm, a gigantic top in Sên's left hand. He held out his other hand to Miss Gilbert.

But she drew back a little. "Not with that menagerie at close quarters," she laughed. "I know what those

two do to best dresses. Get down, children, get down at once. Mr. Sên is not a pony."

But the children stayed where they were, clinging to Sên King-lo but the tighter.

"Me love 'im, and 'im love me," Blanche announced.

"See what topping things he's brought us—from Pekin!" Dick bade his cousin.

Ivy raised her eyebrows at Sên King-lo. "You made a quick journey to Pekin and back, Mr. Sên," she said.

"Yes, didn't I? A record journey. I promised these imps some real Chinese toys—weeks ago—and I wired a friend to send them to me. They came this morning. Do come and play with us. We are having a splendid time."

"Do you really enjoy it?" the girl asked incredulously.

"I love it," Sên told her.

Ivy shook her head sadly. "I don't understand you." And her eyes were cold and unfriendly, Sên thought. But he tried once more. "Won't you?" he asked with an effort. The zest had gone out of his voice, and its tone was flat and perfunctory.

"Sit on the floor, and pretend I'm three? No, thank you. Whatever are those?" she demanded—disapprovingly, Sên thought.

"Chinese kites," he told her dully.

Almost a dozen were stacked in one corner—balloon-shaped bodies with bat-shaped wings.

"Practising for next Easter?" she queried a little superciliously. "Where are your eggs?"

"Oh—we'll get the eggs; dozens and dozens of eggs," Sên assured her.

Blanche gave a gurgle of delight and assaulted Sên's ear with a damp rosebud kiss. Ivy saw him wince.

"It's your own fault," she told him. "Well, I'm off."

"Tum back to tea," Blanche said generously.

"Yes, cousin Ive—you must," Dick added. "Mr. Sên is having his with us."

"You'll have to excuse me, Dick," Ivy refused. "Mr. Sên will pour beautifully, I'm sure."

"Dere's doin' to be muffens," Blanche announced proudly.

But Ivy stood firm. "Not even for crumpets! Ba. You are a hero, Mr. Sên." And she left them.

Sên bowed gravely and returned to the floor, and as she crossed the hall she heard the great top spin.

The children squealed with delight, but Sên King-lo smothered a sigh.

How desirable she'd looked there in the doorway—though even in his mind he did not consciously word it like that—the girl in her silvery steel-trimmed gown, violets at her breast, and in the picture hat that shaded her brunette face and was tied with violet ribbons under her dimpled, mutinous chin. He had never desired her more—and never had he desired her less—though it never yet had occurred to him that he, intensely Chinese, desired her at all: the girl who had no affection for children, no share in their fresh little pleasures, no tenderness for the baby-lives that were of her own near kindred.

And Emma Snow, who noticed most things, and chattered and laughed over many, noticed—and said nothing about it—that for many days Sên King-lo sent no lilies-of-the-valley to Ivy.

CHAPTER XX

EMMELINE HAMILTON was silly—decadent even but she was far from stupid. She made her move at once now, but she made it deftly and unbiased or hampered by anything that Reginald had said or that he felt.

Rumor began to scratch and tear at Sên King-lo, and it did not leave Ivy Gilbert quite unscotched—though, for a time, it left her unsmirched.

It was winter now, and November winds rattled leafless branches at Arlington and on the hillside woods above old Fort Totten's star-shaped embankments and cherished parapets. The Potomac crawled gray and sullen between ice-scummed shores. If gossip and scandal are rampant in the capital's summer-time, in winter they flourish like upas trees and leap to maturity and detail like the Indian conjurer's mango tree. Gossip likes the fireside glow, and scandal's a greedy drinker of afternoon tea—likes its feet on the fender, and congenial cronies with light heads and easy chairs close drawn.

Sên King-lo was a roué. There was a Chinese girl close-kept in a high-up flat over a laundry, its front curtains never open night or day—and there were others! He was the real proprietor of a select gambling-place. He trafficked in opium—oh dear, yes. He got tipsy at the Club—no one knew where he got the stuff, but he did. It had been hushed up—though it wouldn't have been for an American citizen—but when it came to a heathen Chinaman! He had tried to marry Miss Hamilton, but she wouldn't look at him. The Snows ought to be more careful of their young cousin,

really they should. Of course, Sir Charles was a busy man. But Lady Snow, one might think, might see what was up. Marry Ivy Gilbert? Of course not. There were other endings than that to such affairs, more lurid endings, my dear. They were together half the time now, *and at all hours.* They went off together on horseback, miles and miles. A groom behind them—an English groom? Oh dear, no—not always. And what if he was? The tea-cups clacked on their saucers, and the tongues clacked too—not all of them feminine tongues. Who had passed that counterfeit bill at the Metropolitan Club? Why was it hushed up? Who had hushed it, and how? Sên King-lo cheated at cards. But, dear old bean, all Chinamen did that. Early in December the Chinese girl who lived in the close-curtained flat over the laundry—no one seemed too sure quite where—died. No doctor—no anything. The poor thing's body was taken out in the dead of night. All bumpty-bump in a box down the laundry back stairs. Scandalous! Taken across the river in a rowboat. What were the police about? And buried, or disposed of somehow — somewhere — goodness only knows where! Isn't it horrible? And that very same night Sên King-lo had gone to the ball at General Howard's—the Howards of all people—who thought half the nicest people in Washington not good enough to know their girls—and Lady Egerton had danced with him—and so had Lucy Howard—and he'd danced with Lady Snow, and he had danced twice with the Gilbert girl. There could be only one end to it! Of course!

The rumors trickled, then swelled, and no one knew —or cared—who was their source. And Sên King-lo was more talked of than ever and not run after any the less. And Ivy was cold-shouldered a little—when Lady

Snow was not looking. You couldn't slight *Lady* Snow's cousin when Lady Snow was looking.

Every one heard it all—every one but Lady Snow herself and Ivy and Sên King-lo. Lady Snow heard none of it. Ivy heard a good deal, but none of the gossip that linked her name with Sên's. All that was worst of it reached Sên King-lo, but only the slightest whisper of what was said of his acquaintance with Miss Gilbert.

Sên took no notice—except that he watched the English girl's face with speculative, careful eyes.

Their acquaintance still waxed—though still in his mind a flaw lingered and rankled: Ivy's unwomanly dislike of children.

Dr. Ray heard the unclean talk at her hotel and in several drawing-rooms; heard it and invited Mr. Sên to dinner. Miss Townsend heard it in her Rosehill fastness and crossed the purveyor off her visiting list—and, after doing that two or three times, heard it no more. Sir Charles Snow heard it all and urged Sên King-lo the oftener to his board and encouraged him even more cordially to Blanche and Dick's nursery. Toys were costing Sên King-lo almost as much now as lilies-of-the-valley in December were. Snow and Sên never spoke to each other of the crawling gossip. But each knew that the other knew that they both knew; and they smiled into each other's eyes now and then—but no plainer allusion passed between them, and Sên King-lo accepted Charles Snow's loyalty and faith as a matter of course, and quite simply.

The Chinese Minister heard of all that was said. It was he that told Sên; no other man could have dared —unless Snow had cared to or thought it worth while. The Chinese Minister told it in all its ugly grimness

—but did not speak of Miss Gilbert—but his old eyes danced and his sides shook with mirth.

Sên heard him gravely and made no comment beyond a cold smile and a slight indifferent gesture.

As for Ivy she showed Mr. Sên a warmer, franker friendliness than she had before; and Sên understood and was grateful and was only able to refrain from telling her so because it was impossible to speak of such things to a girl.

Then Emmeline Hamilton reloaded her dice and threw them again. She did it twice.

A morning paper—not one of the best reputed—announced the engagement of Sên King-lo and Miss Hamilton. No names were mentioned, but the descriptions of "a prominent Chicago clergyman's daughter and a socially conspicuous young Chinese diplomat" were too well and accurately done to be mistakable.

Washington tittered. And the Chinese Minister's sides shook again.

So Sén King-lo had been playing with Miss Gilbert all the time—and Emmeline Hamilton had won! For she herself had advertised her infatuation too vividly and widely for any one at all *au fait* with the capital's social swimmers not to know of it—no matter what they had said a month ago. That was how most of the breakfast tables summed it up. But a handful of other individuals did not accept the situation so. Dr. Ray smiled sagely when her attention was called to the paragraph —the journal was not one which she herself read—and then the physician's face grew grave.

"Poor girl," she said to herself—not referring to Ivy. The erudite Latin of an uncomfortable malady had crossed her thought. And she had heard Joseph

Hamilton preach — once. She had not called it "preach"; she had called it "perform."

Sên King-lo—like all of his race, always an early riser—chanced in at the Club soon after breakfast, picked up the first sheet he saw, and caught, not his own name but the clearly pointed lines. It was not a journal taken in at the Chinese Legation.

Sên too smiled, even more coldly than Dr. Ray had, purloined the page and went leisurely off towards Judiciary Square, and, his business there done, walked a little more briskly to Massachusetts Avenue. He asked neither for Lady Snow nor for Sir Charles, but for Miss Gilbert.

Would she ride? he asked, when she came down.

She shook her head. "I wish I could. But it's the verb 'to be' and the boundaries of the Sea of Marmora for me today."

"Turn them over, lock, stock and barrel—verb, sea, children and all—to Justine. It's a perfect day, and I very much wish you'd come," he urged.

"It is a tempting day," Ivy owned.

"Do come."

"Oh—well," she yielded, "they learn as much when I don't teach them as when I do; and Justine shall hear them slaughter the verb 'to be' in French. Marmora can wait a day."

"It will wait, on all its four boundaries, for many a day, if I'm any judge of Dick and Ba," Sên asserted.

Ivy nodded and laughed. "Ring and order Wolf then, while I put on my habit, will you?"

"Thank you," Sên told her, as he opened the door.

Usually Sên King-lo asked her where they should ride, but today he took the way. And Ivy wondered why he chose the streets he did, keeping some time

to the residential streets and circles before he turned towards the country.

"What are we doing, Mr. Sên?" she demanded, as they passed by the Sheridan house for the second time. "And why are we walking? Are you trying to see some one?"

"No one, whom I do not see," he answered lightly. "But one likes to be seen sometimes."

"You are going up and down the same streets," she grumbled.

"I am taking a short cut," Sên told her gravely. And then he laughed.

But after that the girl got her canter, and they lunched with Miss Julia—Dr. Ray chanced to be lunching also —and rode back in the crisp of the early sunset.

They had no groom with them today, as now they sometimes did not.

Miss Townsend scarcely approved of that—but she made no remark. It was Lady Snow's business, not hers. And Miss Julia was no poacher.

The two women stood at the door to see them go, and Elenore Ray noticed that they were unattended—and smiled. Girls often rode so in Chicago. But that was not why the Chicago physician smiled.

And she had smiled too at lunch, when Ivy had twitted Sên upon the slow passing and repassing up and down the Washington streets he'd inflicted upon them before he'd let them take the long over-river roads for which she and their horses had longed. And again she demanded why.

But Sên King-lo only had laughed.

CHAPTER XXI

ABRAHAM KELLY was as shrewd and polished as he was hard: a lawyer such as only New England can produce. He liked the Chinese Minister, and his Chinese Excellency liked and trusted Kelly.

Miss Hamilton never had met him, but she knew of him—every one did, for he was a national asset—and she knew him by sight; for the stern and upright old man was an inveterate theater-goer, and rarely missed a first night, sitting through tragedy and comedy with equal grimness, and insisting, at the fall of every curtain, that there never had been and never would be but one playhouse of merit: the Boston Museum—never an artist to compare with Annie Clarke and Baron and Warren and Mrs. Vincent, and never a play to equal "The Angel of Midnight."

Emmeline was puzzled when his card was brought to her, but after a moment she said, "Yes—I'll see him."

Perhaps Uncle Silas had died and had left her most of his money—most sensible of him, if he had, for she'd make better use of it than ever Reg would. Perhaps Uncle Silas had, and Mr. Kelly had come to tell her of her legacy. She'd wear deep mourning for her uncle, of course, if he'd left her a lot—half or more. She loved white, and white was Chinese mourning she knew. For, if Miss Hamilton knew less than nothing of China, it was not because she had not read feverishly a large number of books telling of that country and its people.

But surely her father or mother would have telegraphed, if old Uncle Silas was dead. No—she was afraid it couldn't be that. Well, she'd said he could

come up—and she might as well see him, no matter what it was.

She went to the window and arranged herself there in an Oriental languorous attitude.

She thought that the light from the window and the background of purple, dragon-embroidered curtains, with a candle-lantern of jangling glass beads hanging between them, suited her well.

And Emmeline was looking her best today. Excitement was tinging her thin face with almost a girlish and pretty rose, and her pale eyes were sparkling. She was hoping so much from the paragraph in the paper of which several copies—blue penciled—lay about the room conspicuously. The paragraph was in just as she'd wished. And out of one copy of the paper she'd cut it, and she was wearing it now in the jade locket over her heart! She was hoping everything from Sên King-lo's chivalry! The Chinese were so chivalrous—all the best authorities said so, and a man who had spent a week in Shanghai had told her once that it was perfectly true, and even a Presbyterian missionary friend of her father's to whom she had repeated it had made no reply.

At the sound of hoofs she turned her face to the window, to see who was riding by; she didn't ride herself, she thought it too mannish, and she didn't enjoy it—but she always liked to watch men who rode. And though she never yet had seen him pass her window, there was always a chance that it might be. . . .

It was. And a bitter look rushed into her eyes. For Sên King-lo was speaking to Ivy Gilbert, and Ivy was laughing back at him—neither paying any undue attention to the horses they rode.

Emmeline watched them out of sight—neither looked

up at her window—and she turned back with a paler face as Kelly came into the room. He bowed, and then he coughed. The clouds of smoke from the many clustering joss-sticks had smote him, throat and nose.

Emmeline motioned to him languorously. "Pray be seated, Mr. Kelly."

The lawyer threw a searching glance across the remarkable room and bowed his thanks. The inlaid stool did not attract him, and there was nothing else to sit on—if it was intended for seating purposes. That the cushions on the floor were so intended did not cross his mind—a shrewd and versatile mind, but adamantly New-Englandish.

"I shall detain you but a moment, Madam," he said, still standing. "My client, Mr. Sên King-lo——"

"Oh, but you must sit down." Emmeline rushed at him, and caught his arm in almost caressing fingers.

Abraham Kelly bowed and backed and extracted his broadcloth dexterously.

"Mr. Sên King-lo has seen with great distress and grave indignation the paragraph which you, I observe, also have seen." He pointed a lean fore-finger at the blue-marked sheet on the nearest cocktail table. "He has instructed me to express to you his deepest concern that you, a lady whom he scarcely knows, should have been libeled so scurrilously in the intolerable journalistic falsehood." Emmeline sighed sentimentally. "The base and unfounded insinuation will be withdrawn, contradicted and apologized for in tomorrow's issue. I already have seen the editor and the proprietor and myself dictated the contradiction and the apology. But my client wishes me to express to you his indignation and regret. If we can find the original culprit, I am instructed to push the case to the severest limit our

laws provide, unless—*unless* you, Madam, would prefer, for obvious reasons, that the matter be dropped and we all rest satisfied with the withdrawal and apology. It is for you to decide."

"I should like to see Mr. Sên himself about it first," Emmeline said sentimentally.

"That I fear will be impossible now," the lawyer replied regretfully. "Having put the matter in my hands, my client cannot speak on the matter except through me. We lawyers are sticklers, you know, and the Chinese are punctilious—and none more so than Mr. Sên King-lo."

"Nonsense!" Emmeline snapped. "I insist upon seeing Mr. Sên about it."

"Impossible," the lawyer told her tersely.

"I shall write to him," Miss Hamilton insisted sulkily. "Mr. Sên himself and I will decide what we are going to do about it. I had a right to be consulted *before* you went to the paper—not after. It's as much my affair as Mr. Sên's. And I don't propose to be left out of it. I shall telephone the newspaper at once."

Kelly bowed.

"And I shall write to King-lo," she repeated hysterically.

"And he will hand your note to me to answer," the lawyer told her smoothly.

"Show a woman's letter—her personal letter—to *you!* He couldn't!"

"Pardon me; he would have to. And I have seen many women's personal letters." He smiled a little.

"I shall mark it 'Private,'" the girl almost hissed.

The lawyer bowed. But hard as he was—all buckram and broadcloth and relentless procedure—he was sorry for the unstrung pallid creature facing him. He

had diagnosed her as Dr. Ray had—as quickly and convincedly. Lawyers see as much, perhaps, of that complex as physicians do—even in New England.

"You will let me know—when you have considered it—your decision as to whether we are to ferret out, as we undoubtedly can, the originator of the false and abominable falsehood, or to let that part of it drop. Our only wish is to spare you further annoyance."

"I'll let Mr. Sên know," Miss Hamilton answered haughtily. "You are not my lawyer. I'll choose my own lawyer, if I want one."

Kelly bowed.

"I insist—" she began hotly; but Abraham Kelly had bowed himself out.

Emmeline stood for several moments where he'd left her, limp with rage, her thin breast heaving painfully, her clenched hands raised above her head.

As his footsteps died away, she threw herself face downwards on her cushions, and broke into hard, tearless sobs, her nervous fingers picking convulsively at the pillows' silks and tinsels.

Sên King-lo's chivalry had failed her. And he was riding with Ivy Gilbert!

But she scorned her defeat. She was not through yet, and she'd throw her dice again.

CHAPTER XXII

IVY GILBERT heard of the paragraph of course; every one did. She heard of it that evening, but she gave it even less thought than Sir Charles did; for he wondered idly who had inspired it and why, but Ivy did not even do that. She heard of it, but she

did not trouble to read it, and Emma, watching, wondered if she'd been mistaken in believing that Ivy had come to take more than a friendly interest in Mr. Sên. If she did, she gave no sign now.

Of the ugly stories that were clouding Sên's name more persistently every day, no word ever had been spoken by Lady Snow as yet. Emma Snow had no wish to mention them to her cousin, and had she wished, which she did not, to speak of them to Sir Charles, would not have dared do it.

A few days after the morning journal had eaten its yesterday's words, Lady Snow's drawing-room was very full even for her "at home" day.

Emmeline Hamilton came very early, and finding a moment and a corner alone with Ivy, said suddenly, "Do you care for King-lo?"

Ivy stiffened. "Do I what, Miss Hamilton?"

"You know that my brother cares for you."

"We will not discuss that," Ivy cut her short.

"And Sên King-lo is all the world to me."

"Oh—hush," Ivy cried, ashamed to her core that any girl could be so brazen—for such she considered the other's avowal of feeling for a man with whom, as Ivy knew, her acquaintance was very slight. It did not shock her at all that Miss Hamilton had come to care for a Chinese—for she, Ivy herself, had ceased to think of Sên King-lo as of a race apart and debarred and even unconsciously thought of him as of one far less alien to her than most of the men she met here.

"He is," Emmeline went desperately on, "and I don't care who knows it——"

"That is evident," Ivy Gilbert thought. But she said nothing.

"—and he'd have been engaged to me now, if it wasn't for you."

"That is preposterous," Ivy interrupted indignantly.

"It *is* preposterous," Emmeline agreed quickly; "for he does not care for you really, and I don't believe that you care for him. If you do care for him, say so—" Ivy's lip curled—"and then it will be a fair fight between you and me. But, if you don't, won't you give him back to me? I want him. Do you?"

"I think you must be mad, and I know you are disgusting," Ivy rather panted, looking at Emmeline with horror-widened eyes, and moving to go.

But Emmeline caught at her wrist with vise-like thin fingers; and short of making a scene in Emma's drawing-room, where already a few other guests were trickling in, there was no escape. So she sat down again. You must humor lunatics; she had always heard that. Well—she hoped she'd not meet another lunatic soon.

"Answer me! You shall! Do you care for King-lo?"

"I like Mr. Sên—as I think every one does," Ivy said coldly.

"Only that?"

Ivy bent her head, with a look of contempt straight into Emmeline's eyes.

"Oh—he is perfect!" Emmeline bleated. "Will you give him back to me?"

"I cannot give what is not mine. And I will not listen to any more insult—not if I have to appeal to my cousin."

"Is he coming here today?" Emmeline pleaded abjectly, a sudden change in tone and manner. Dr. Ray would have read it apprehensively; but Ivy was merely blankly amazed.

"I do not know," she answered truthfully.

"Did he give you those flowers you are wearing?"

But that was too much—scene or no scene. Miss Gilbert rose again, and this time the other made no attempt to stay her but called after her, "I know he did," in an overstrained voice that made heads turn and eyebrows raise.

Guests came and went, but Emmeline Hamilton stayed. Lady Snow looked at her curiously more than once. Ivy kept out of her way.

It was growing late, but half a dozen tardy comers lingered over the blazing logs and tinkling tea-cups, and Emmeline pushed into the group, shivering a little, and drawing about her thin, lightly clad shoulders the long-drooping fur that she had not left in the hall. Her mood had changed again.

"You were speaking of Sên King-lo," she said—but no one had mentioned him there. "Every one is. It is odious that he should be tolerated among us. He ought to be horsewhipped out of the place." And in spite of Lady Snow's imperative gesture, she plunged into all the recent scandal—even into noisome details. And Sên King-lo came into the room as she shrilly told one nauseous item. "Had you heard all this?" she demanded pointedly of Ivy.

"Yes—all, though worded less uncomfortably, I'm glad to say, than you have," Miss Gilbert said clearly, rising and crossing the room to Sên King-lo, who stood in the doorway with Sir Charles Snow beside him. "Good afternoon Mr. Sên,"—it was then that the other women turned and saw him,—"I was wishing you'd come. I want you to ride with me tomorrow. Will you take me?"

"You know how glad I always am," he replied, as she gave him her hand. His face had not changed as

he had unavoidably heard Emmeline's last sentences. But his eyes flashed into Ivy's as he held her fingers, and then he turned and went to his hostess, cool and quiet as he always was.

But Ivy spoke to him again as soon as Emma had greeted him.

"Thank you for my lilies," she said with a glance down at them, and a smile into his eyes: "they are lovelier than ever today, I think."

Before Sên could reply—and he never was slow—Miss Hamilton rose from her chair dramatically; but before she could speak, Sir Charles Snow gave her his arm and led her courteously from the room. Sên King-lo went to the door and opened and held it.

The others went almost at once, and Lady Snow went into the hall with the last to go and did not come back. But she said to Sên as she passed him, "Do stay and dine—we'll none of us dress."

"Shall I stay?" Sên asked Ivy, as the closed door left them alone.

"I want you to," she answered. "And thank you again for my lilies. Won't you have a few sprays—they'll dress you for dinner—as they do me," and she held out the sprays she'd pulled from her dress as she spoke.

"So they will," Sên said, as he bowed over the tiny white bells of perfume and the fingers that gave them. "Thank you."

CHAPTER XXIII

THEY rode the next day, and Ivy suggested "a Washington ride," but Sên laughed and turned Sinbad towards the Potomac, across the bridge, into the icicled country roads.

No mention was made, of course, as none had been made the evening before, of the cancerous rumors with which society's amiable chit-chat had been teeming for weeks, and the ugliest detail of which Emmeline had retailed shrilly yesterday as Sên stood within unavoidable earshot in Lady Snow's drawing-room. But they felt a deeper companionship today than they had before; a more basic and secured good-fellowship, absolutely devoid of sentimentality, as little fettered or fed by sex as waxing comradeships between a man and a girl, congenial and heart-free, can be; a good-fellowship not unlike the friendship of Sên and Charles Snow, wholesomely and strongly rooted in a mutual respect which both felt could neither be destroyed nor damaged.

In spite of the cold, they rode slowly now and then. For the winter-kissed waysides were indescribably lovely, and Sên King-lo could not pass that loveliness quickly by. To him it was as if God had painted in silver and white and black the long out-rolled picture of the inimitable landscape's scroll; painted and limned it, and breathed His high living message into it more supremely, more beautifully, than ever even the master-brush of great Ma Yuen had. They spoke to Sên King-lo and tingled his Chinese soul: the long sweeps of glorious panoramic beauty, with each tiniest black leafless twig softened by cuddling little drift-patches of

spotless snow and sparkling with diamond dew-drops of ice. To the English girl it looked just fairyland, exquisitely beautiful, quite unreal—and she heard no message. Such the difference of her Western spirit and eyes and his of the East. She saw it a wonderful spectacle and was glad she'd come; he merged in it, and forgot self—and was silent. And from his silence, the far-look in his eyes, the slight flush on his face, she caught something of his mood, too, perhaps, *just* a something of his spirit. They never before had been so close—or so far. She echoed his pleasure, but could not share his absorption; she alien here, in the white Virginia woods, with snow and thin gleams of ice where ice and snow come but rarely, the white passion of December rapturously calling Earth its bride. Sên King-lo felt at home; for the hour, no longer afar from China. Not once in many years does winter show so in England. In his Chinese home Sên had seen winter so a thousand times.

They lingered—but as the sun sank, backing the black and gray tree-trunks with royal colors, they turned back towards the city. As they neared it the girl turned her head at the quick clatter of hoofs behind them—gaining upon them, almost, she thought, as if in pursuit.

Again today no groom was with them.

She saw who it was and turned her head back with an impatient frown on her face but said nothing.

Sên King-lo did not see Reginald Hamilton until Hamilton drew his horse neck and neck with Sên's.

Hamilton did not lift his hat, and King-lo's slim fingers tightened slightly on his riding-crop.

Reginald was winded, a little. He was no great horseman, and he had been drinking—though not to excess.

It was physical inconvenience and personal emotion that quivered and belched him far more than bourbon and bitters.

"I'll deal with you later, you yellow, opium-sodden chimpanzee," he cried thickly, with an insulting motion of his whip. "Be off with you now! I'll not allow you to ride with this lady. Don't let me catch you so much as speaking to her again, you vermin-fed laundry whelp! Understand?"

Sên smiled slightly, his eyes perfectly quiet, and turned to the girl beside him.

"Please ride on a little, Miss Gilbert," he asked easily. "I won't be a moment."

"No," Ivy told him. "I stay with you. Are you going to kill him?"

"In *your* presence? No, not even whip him—merely set him on his feet. Please go. I'll be with you almost at once."

Ivy did not answer him. She had grown very white—but not with fear, not even with nervousness, Sên knew. She sat perfectly still, and she did not move or speak again.

Reginald raised his whip, a little unsteadily.

The Chinese man leisurely threw his reins over one arm, the loop of his crop over one finger, leaned lightly a little from his saddle, caught Reginald Hamilton by the arms, and swung him down to the ground—not roughly—setting him square on his feet.

Sên gave the riderless horse an imperative but friendly tap on its flank with his crop, and it started off at a slow trot.

Reginald stood stock-still; purple, spluttering, wordless.

"I hope it'll find its stable," Sên said to Ivy lightly.

"I daresay it will; they usually do. Shall we walk our horses on, Miss Gilbert?"

They went on in silence, and after a few moments, because he saw how white and cold the girl's face looked, Sên set a faster pace, and they kept it until, as they passed the Louise Home, Ivy slackened her reins and looked at him with a tinkle and gurgle of girlish laughter, which Sên King-lo, as Sir Charles did, always thought had a sound of China.

He looked at her with a question in his smile.

"I was thinking," she told him—"I don't think you'll mind, we are good friends——"

"The best of friends," Sên King-lo said gravely, holding his hat in his hand as he spoke.

"I was thinking of your hands, Mr. Sên, and of a silly thing I thought the first time we met—in the summer—at Miss Julia's——"

"I have not forgotten where I first saw you," Sên said, with no hint or sound of hidden meaning.

"Your hands—they are different—you know"—Ivy hesitated a little.

"Chinese," Sên said.

"Yes," the girl nodded, "and not very thick, and I wondered—that night at Miss Julia's—how much use they'd be at fisticuffs. I know now, Mr. Sên."

She let the chamois loop on her riding-crop just fleck the hand on his horse's bridle as she spoke, her eyes freemason friendly on him.

Sên lay his hand on her pommel for a moment. "Chinese hands," he told her, "that always will serve to take care of you when you allow me to be your escort."

"I know that," the girl said quietly.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE story of Reginald Hamilton's last ride in Washington never got out. His horse found its way back to its stable, quite uninjured, and that, plus a check for a bill never before too promptly paid, satisfied the liveryman who owned it. Unlike Washington society, he was not curious. And neither Ivy nor Sên King-lo told any one—for some weeks not even Sir Charles. Had Hamilton stayed on in Washington, probably both his cousin and their friend would have felt that Snow must be told—that he, the only man in America who had a right to do it, might stand between the girl and any further advances of the Reginald. But a week after his descent to the snow-thick road, Reginald and his sister, together, though not on speaking terms, betook them to Chicago.

Reginald Hamilton had been away from Washington for a few days when Emmeline had achieved her newspaper *coup;* and on his return, after the ill-fated paragraph's contradiction, she had managed to prevent him from attempting a tardy intervention. But he had heard all about it, of course; and, though not quite dull enough to doubt that the invention had been Emmeline's, with intention and hope behind it, it had humiliated as well as enraged him; and this, added to his thwarted and growing passion for Ivy, had swung him quite off his balance of mind and breeding, never very secure. And his outrageous and, because futile, absurd behavior had been, at least in part, a demented blow struck in his sister's defense. He, craven though he was, would have slain Emmeline himself before he'd have seen her married to a Chinese; but he was infuriated that Chinese Sên

King-lo had scorned the hint which, as Hamilton (and all Washington) knew, Emmeline more than once had given.

By mid-January the rumors that had smirched Sên's name had died away and made room for others about some one else. Washington society has too many sensations to dawdle long over one—and too many great interests to quite lose its head over things that are in truth as uninteresting as they are vicious and petty.

Sên still rode and walked with Ivy, had long Anglo-Chinese conferences with Snow, still played with Dick and Blanche, sometimes carrying them off to have several hours of high-jinks in his own rooms. Sir Charles went there sometimes, and Emma Snow had had tea there with Sên King-lo twice and had lunched there once with Sên and Miss Julia: a very great and unmerited honor for Sên, Uncle Lysander thought. Kow Li had a different opinion which he kept to himself.

Ivy had not been invited. Mary Withrow and Lucille Smith wondered why. Emma Snow and Dr. Ray, who still was in Washington, thought they knew, but, like Kow Li, each kept her opinion strictly to herself.

A great English statesman was the lion of the January hour. His name was world-known, and he had married a minor royalty. He was staying with the Snows, and Lady Snow's big drawing-room was insufficient for her callers.

Sir Charles and his wife had gone with the Duke to the White House an hour ago, and Sên King-lo and Ivy were looking at the confession her cousin's guest had written just before dinner; the first contribution of that sort she had asked for since Sên's.

"That reminds me," she said, as he closed the book, and she took it from him and opened it again, turning

the pages until she found his, "I've always meant to ask you or Charlie and always forgotten to do it—I've such a sieve of a head." She laid her finger below the character that stood for a woman's name. "Will you pronounce it for me?"

Sên spoke the Chinese word.

She made him repeat it and tried to say it after him.

"Oh, it would take me years! What an appalling language!" She laughed at him. "But I like your favorite name, Mr. Sên. I like its sound when you say it. I think it is beautiful."

"The most beautiful word in the world to me," Sên said—"the most beautiful name in the world. We Chinese are said to crave only sons. But as long as I can remember, my heart's desire has been to have a daughter whose mother would let me give her that name."

He spoke quite simply, for all his English training, too Chinese to feel any mawkish hesitancy in speaking to a friend, a girl he respected, of life's best realities. Something that hurt a little, something new and strange, pricked at Ivy Gilbert's heart.

Sên King-lo's wife! His Chinese wife! She had never thought of her. She always had thought of him as just Sên King-lo—the Sên King-lo she knew and liked and talked with and rode with—unmarried, here in Washington to stay. More often than not she forgot that he was not English, more alien than she was, alien very differently from her. Of course he'd go back to China—and marry there—some day. Why not? How silly she was! *All* Chinese married. She didn't know much about them, but she knew that much. Had his ancestors worn pig-tails? Even his own father, perhaps! It was a horrid thought. She looked up from

the Chinese page of her book to the Chinese man on the other side of the small, low table between them, a sudden fear, a revulsion, in her young English eyes—and looked down again very quickly.

"Of course you couldn't write it in English," she spoke a little breathlessly; "you had to leave the space blank. There isn't any English name for the Chinese name, of course. You couldn't translate it."

"No," he told her, "that was not the reason. There is an English translation for many Chinese names—and this is one. I have written it in English—once or twice," he added with a smile that neither he nor she understood.

"Then why—" she began.

"It was my girl-mother's name, Miss Gilbert, and I love it for that, even far more than I do for the music it makes—it *is* music in *my* language and in yours. It was the last word my father ever spoke."

"I beg your pardon," Ivy told him shyly. "I'm so sorry. Of course, you wouldn't write it in my confession-book."

"But I did. I wrote it in Chinese. I'll write it now in English, if you'll let me. I didn't when I wrote the English pages, because I could not take that liberty with *your* name."

"My——"

Sên King-lo's eyes kindled into hers. "My mother's name"—his lips seemed to caress it as he spoke it—"was Ruby."

And then the girl knew.

CHAPTER XXV

SÊN KING-LO did not know—yet. But Ivy knew. Almost always the woman knows first—no matter how inexperienced she is, or how experienced he.

Ivy knew. And because she reeled a little under the shock—and all that it meant—she blundered into words that were the last she'd have spoken, if she and her tongue had known what they were doing.

"How odd! Your mother's name was Ruby Sên."

She knew what she'd said the moment she'd said it, and she flushed, face and neck, almost as crimson as a Chinese's bride's veil.

Even then the man did not know—neither his secret nor hers. But the first far-off glimmering of his own came to him then—like the shimmering scent of distant flowers or the tremble of music a long way away.

He saw Ivy's confusion, the red on her face, and that her lips and hands trembled a little. But he mistook it to be only her vexation for a *faux pas* that the sensitive taste of so nice a girl exaggerated out of all proportion to the small thing it was.

"But no," he reminded her with a light laugh, "it was not—it was Sên Ruby."

Ivy laughed too then. But the odd inverted sound of it hurt her—"Sên Ruby"—reminding her, admonishing her, of the bar eternally set, the race-bar that decency—or was it prejudice?—set between East and West. *She* never could leap that bar, and she knew that he never would. "English-Chinese!"

She was glad when Sên King-lo went to the piano. (Was it tact or because he felt like playing? she wondered. It was both.) And she was still more glad

when Emma came in with Sir Charles and the Duke. And as soon as she decently could she said goodnight and left them.

She was very weary as she trudged up the easy stairs —and her young soul was bitter. Other girls kept their dreams—at least for a time—but she might not keep hers for an hour—not for one heart-beat of time.

Chinese!

She lay awake a long time wishing the day would come, dreading its coming. She did not hear the front door close, but she heard Sên's step as it passed under her window, and she smothered her ears in her pillow.

It was almost morning when at last she slept, and she dreamed of Sên King-lo's wife—his Chinese wife and hated her. She dreamed of Sên King-lo in Chinese dress—skirts, hair, and all—and loathed herself. She mocked herself, and his eyes mocked her.

She woke to a rush of thought—the thought that her name was "Ruby" and that she was more glad of that than she ever had been of anything else. Charles called her "Ruby" almost as often as he did "Ivy." What a pale insipid name "Ivy" was—a silly name. Why hadn't they called her only "Ruby"?

Oh, the shame and the pain of it all! To have given her love unasked, unsought, unwanted! And to a man of a debarred race! But why? Why was it debarred? Did he know? Did he suspect it? Had she told him? She shivered down in her warm bed and closed her miserable eyes—ashamed to have even the daylight see her. How was she to face Emma and Charlie—*and* Sên King-lo? He must never know. Whatever he believed now, led to by her, she must convince him that he had made an absurd mistake. She would.

At breakfast Sir Charles smiled affectionately at her,

glad to see her so happy and full of fun, and the Duke chuckled more than once. Marie should ask her to stay with them when the Snows came home, and if Rupert fell in love with her—who cared? Not Rupert's father. Not he! But Emma, watching and listening, grew grave at heart, and her eyes were anxious though her lips smiled. How Charlie would hate it! Her poor Charlie! If only they'd left Ivy at home in England!

For Lady Snow knew what neither Ivy nor Sên King-lo did and had little doubt of how it would end. But she feared that in the meantime Ivy was going to be very ill. The girl was drinking too much coffee, and she was forcing herself to eat.

All day Ivy listened for a voice and a footstep. She longed not to see Sên King-lo again. But her pride told her she must; and, more than she wished not to face him again, she longed to do so and get it well over. She'd carry her head high to the last. And she'd find an excuse to go back to England after Easter. She never had promised to stay with Emma and Charles forever. Whatever she'd do there, however she'd contrive to live there, she did not know. But that did not matter.

Sên King-lo did not come that day. But he sent flowers in his stead—although he had sent her some only yesterday.

Today—for the first time since he *had* sent them—he sent her no lilies. When Ivy opened the florist's box it held only roses—deep-scented, red roses the color of rubies.

Ivy tucked two or three in her belt; it would look less strange, perhaps, to Sên, if he came, than if she did not, she thought.

She and Lady Snow lunched alone that day, and Emma wondered who had sent those roses—but didn't

ask or look at them particularly. But at dinner the Duke had no such scruple.

"You have changed your flowers," he remarked. "I thought you always wore lilies-of-the-valley."

"Not always. A friend gives me lilies sometimes."

"Rather often," the Duke observed slyly.

"I bought my red roses," Ivy continued, "and I paid dear for them."

"Flowers are a scandalous price in winter," the Duke agreed.

"These were!" Ivy laughed.

Lady Snow shot her a covert glance. Why had Ivy told that lie? There was no need for her to have said anything. She had not bought those roses. The house was full of flowers always, and Ivy always was free of them all. Ivy's money went, almost to a dollar, on clothes. How had they cost her dear? That much had sounded true to Emma Snow's quick ears.

"By the way," Sir Charles asked presently, "what was Blanche crying so hard over this afternoon?"

Ivy flushed and answered. "She was in a temper because I would not give her one of my roses."

The two men looked surprised. How unlike Ivy, Sir Charles thought, and was puzzled.

Lady Snow crumbled her bread. She was not puzzled. She knew now. Sên King-lo had sent those roses. But how had Ivy paid dear for them—the flowers of which she would not spare Blanche even one? Had she refused Sên King-lo last night? She—Emma—feared not.

CHAPTER XXVI

TWO more days passed, and then Sên came.

Ivy met him gaily, bearing herself so naturally, her gaiety so unexaggerated, that she almost deceived herself and must have deceived him completely, if it ever had entered his head that she cared for him at all beyond friendliness—which it never had. He knew the signs of open and almost-open infatuation; these signs had been hurled at him too hard and too persistently not to have driven their flagrant message in. But the signs of a rapprochement that gave no sign and offered or asked no approach were hidden from his sharp eyes. And the warming inclination of an essentially modest girl, who also was both proud and self-in-hand, showed not at all to Sên, who not only was not vain, but even was modest.

Their camaraderie went on as it had. Ivy was too proud to check it at all, and after a little, even to her shocked sensitiveness, much of the gnawing bitterness wore away, and all the pleasure and sweetness stayed.

Her disgust and self-revulsion because she had turned in personal affection—emotion even—to a man so set from her by race quite slipped away, and only her shame at loving unloved and unsought remained.

Again she found it hard to remember that Sên was Chinese—less of her own race than a Spaniard or Russian was. It was *he,* his personality that appealed to and pleased her, and she did not realize that his race was a strong and essential part of both, and that in both he was intensely Chinese. To her he was merely the man, because so much *the* man.

And when she did think about it—that he was Chinese,

she English—it gradually grew to her a lesser and almost negligible thing. Chinese and English of gentle birth did not marry. But *was* it a sound decency or only a cheap and sorry prejudice that barred the way? Inherited reason said "decency," but her heart and her own estimate of Sên, her own satisfaction and ease in his companionship, leaned to the other answer. She ceased to feel any shame that she had given her love—for she was relentlessly frank with herself as to that—to an Asian. But that she had let herself care for a man who gave her no thought of that sort in return shamed her cruelly. And she guarded her secret well—now that she knew it herself. Her ignorance had been her danger-time. It was past. She guarded it so well that she deceived eyes sharper to the thing she hid than were the eyes of unsuspecting Sên King-lo. And he had no need to guard. It is easy enough to hide what does not exist. Even Lady Snow began to think that her alarm had barked up a phantom tree, and laughed at herself—and was glad. And Sir Charles laughed up his sleeve at his fanciful wife, and Miss Julia laughed scornfully up hers at Elenore Ray. And only Dr. Ray was not deceived—and said nothing. She saw it all—saw even what neither Ivy nor Sên did. And things went on between Sên King-lo and the English girl as they had—but they went; they did not stand quite stock still. Things are not apt to do that between a man and a maid in springtime. He told her more and more of China than he had, and she learned how to write her second name in Chinese, and one day—it was almost May—Sên King-lo filled the blank he had left in the confession-book. And Ivy locked the book away—not to be written in again, she

intended. But she took it out and looked in it sometimes.

In April the spring was coming. Soft sticky things showed on the leaf-bare trees, if you looked close enough. The grass was reasserting itself. Poor people slacked their fires. Fruit from "down South" was cheaper. Stuffs in the drygoods shops were thinner and paler. The skies gave a promise of summer. The moon laughed again, and some days at noontide the Potomac laughed back at the sun. The magnolia on Miss Julia's sunniest wall hinted of buds, and then the buds began to swell, and Lysander and Dinah sorted out turkey-wings and long-handled brooms of peacocks' feathers against the coming of flies, and spoke of "them ornery niggah's summer cloes," and dreamed at night of big watermelons and green peas.

Ivy just glanced at the house on the other side of the street as she and Sên passed it as they were walking together one late April day. She knew from the number that he lived over there and, from what Emma had said, which were his sitting-room windows, but she never had happened to pass it on foot and in daytime. She had sent notes to him there, but she was not a girl who would go to look where a man friend lived. She made no remark about it now, and neither did he.

"I think you are wrong," he was saying. "As I read it, Ruskin meant——"

Ivy caught his arm and gave a cry.

Two small spotted ponies had dashed madly around the corner from M Street, not quite missing the sharp curb; ponies she usually drove herself when the children *would* go and Watkins could not be spared. A very small groom with a very white face was seesawing wildly at the reins, just the one thing to infuriate the

already crazily maddened ponies. Who had trusted Buttons to drive? Where was Charlie? Was Emma mad? Justine should go for this. Blanche was sobbing and screaming betimes. Dick seemed in scarcely manlier shape, and just as Sên dashed towards the ponies and caught their bridles as in a vise, Dick screamed, and jumped. Buttons gave a superhuman wrench at the reins—one rein broke—and the low phaeton lurched over. Both the children were pinioned under its wreck.

The maddened ponies squealed with fear and rage. They were trembling violently, but they moved on not an inch more. Sên King-lo was holding them. He dared not leave their heads, but Ivy, steeling herself to go to him, saw the agony on his face as he looked at the turned-over trap under which the children lay. The boy driver sat on the sidewalk crying weakly.

"Can you pull the whip out from under there—it is under the wheel—and give him a cut?" Sên asked.

"Perhaps he is hurt," Ivy murmured shakily.

"I don't care if he is dead," Sên snapped. "You and he must lift it off those babies. Be quick! But first put your hand in my pocket—trouser pocket—this left one—get my knife—open it. Can you cut the traces? Be quick!"

She fumbled with the knife, but—though she ripped her light glove and tore her nail—she could not open the blade. The ponies were plunging wildly, and they were strong little beasts—only the man holding them now ever would know how strong.

Sên called sharply to the boy squat on the curb; but Buttons sat still and continued to blubber.

"Hold it up to my mouth—but look out for their hoofs!" Sên told her.

Ivy obeyed, but as his teeth tugged at the blade—perhaps her hands trembled a little in spite of her, for a moan of pain came from under the overturned phaeton—the blade slipped and a trickle of blood went from Sên's lip to his stern-set chin.

"Now cut the traces. You must!"

Ivy tried.

"Saw—saw like hell!"

The moments seemed like hours. Sên knew that the sinews of his left arms were perilously strained—that was nothing, if only their strength held—and Ivy thought that she was only scratching the strong leather she tried to cut.

Oddly so at this hour, the street seemed deserted—no other help in sight or call.

One trace gave a little—then snapped.

"The other!" Sên commanded. "Don't get too near when you go round. Keep clear of their legs. Be as quick as you can!"

She thought her strength was failing; she knew her legs shook; but she made the attempt and reached the other side and feebly attacked the second trace. Sên's task was harder now, because of the one severed trace which, light as the little carriage was, had served in the entanglement as some slight check on the plunging, straining ponies.

A window went up, a colored woman looked out and screamed. A perambulator jolted round the corner. Small beginnings and not helpful ones; but the inevitable crowd was coming at last, and just as the knife slipped from Ivy's unnerved fingers, a very fat, deliberate policeman sauntered into sight. But he was worthy his uniform, for he instantly saw his need

and filled it; ran to Sên's side, blowing his whistle as he ran, and caught at the near pony's bit.

"I can hold them," Sên said. "Get the trap off—carefully—there are children under it."

"There would be!" the policeman grumbled. But again he lost no time, and as men and women, sundry children and dogs, and a cautious sprinkling of cats thickened the street into a crowd, and more heads showed at windows, and people on steps, he, unaided, lifted the wreck off, clear from the little bodies beneath.

There was blood. Dick lay badly still. Blanche was moaning.

Help had come to Sên in abundance now—another policeman, a handsome young Jew—who didn't need to be told, but did it; a maiden lady who wore a green beige veil over a New England bombazine bonnet and steel-rimmed spectacles on her high-bridged nose; a Jesuit priest and a Salvation corporal. The men were enough to hold the still struggling runaways as securely as Sên had done alone; and the ponies already were growing quieter under the hand and the voice of the old New England woman, speaking to them companionably, as she fearlessly stroked and patted them. So Sên King-lo, with questioning torture in his eyes, Saxon pallor on his tawny face, and sickening pain in his shoulders, left the newcomers in charge there, and went to Ivy just in time to see her kneel down and gather Blanche up in her arms. He saw how gently she did it, saw the look on her face, the tears in her eyes, and that she would not let them fall, and he saw the welcoming gladness on the welcoming baby face as Ivy lifted Blanche up and nested the child's bleeding face against her girlish breast.

Sên lifted motionless Dick and bent his ear to the boy's face. Dick was breathing.

They carried the children up to Sên's rooms—the constables protesting and suggesting the ambulance. But they accepted Ivy's, "I am their cousin," Sên King-lo's more imperative, " 'Phone for their father —Sir Charles Snow—British Embassy;—Massachusetts Avenue, if he's gone home. I am taking them to my rooms." And the policeman who had seen Sên holding the demented ponies even put his finger up to his helmet.

CHAPTER XXVII

DICK, more frightened than hurt, was carried home that same night; but wee Blanche was badly hurt, and the doctor would not allow them to move her. The wound on her head was a bad one, her little arm was broken, one baby leg crushed, and most of all the doctors, who came and went hourly, feared internal injuries they could not gage and dare not probe yet. For two weeks the child lay swathed and drugged in Sên King-lo's bed. And Ivy never left her. Even in her drugged stupor—she was too weak for them to drug her heavily —she stirred and whimpered if her cousin went from her. Two nurses were installed, but only from Ivy would the stricken mite take mixture or suffer touch. She looked at her father with hard, hurt eyes; she scarcely noticed her mother; she turned her face from the kindly doctors; hated the nurses, and said so; and it must have gone hard with Ivy for a snatch of food and rest, had Blanche not taken a sudden fancy to Kow Li. She screamed if Ivy moved from her side, unless Kow Li took the cousin's place. She even fretted after a

short half-hour and called for Ivy; and when she did, the girl always came. But, thanks to Kow Li, Miss Gilbert did get half-hour snatches of rest in the next room: Sên King-lo's living room, his Chinese books about it, traces of him everywhere, and as much an atmosphere of China as if it had been in Pekin. Why that was so would be hard to say, but it was. Almost all the sparse furnishing was Western: easy-chairs and chesterfield, many books, and water-colors mostly English. There were no bamboos, pictured or real—not a dragon nor a joss-stick. But the room breathed China, and a girl's sensitiveness caught it, as only one visitor had before: Sir Charles. And he had lived in China.

After the first frightened hour's absorption she had realized poignantly that these were Mr. Sên's rooms —the intimate place of his being and keeping, as true of him and as redolent of him as Rosehill was of Miss Julia.

Miss Julia slept on a large and very elaborate bed; Sên King-lo slept on one that could not comfortably have been narrower, so narrow that even wee, ill Blanche was not lost in it, and so Spartan-plain that its new occupant considered it "horrid shabby," and said so the first day she was well enough to take the slightest interest in anything but her own aching body. Miss Julia's bedroom walls were covered with portraits, all but one of dead and gone Townsends, many as babies, two in their coffins: daguerreotypes, pastels, oils, water-colors, photographs, plain and colored; the one other, the largest and most handsomely framed, a portrait of Robert E. Lee in Confederate uniform. Only one picture hung on Sên King-lo's bedroom walls—Kwan Yin-ko. And, under the doctors and Ivy herself, that Chinese Holy Mother of Mercy wrought the loving

miracle of the English baby's recovery. For Kwan Yin-ko caught the child's roving eye almost at once and riveted it. The nurses thought it a horrible picture, and the night nurse, who had been scrupulously well brought up in Bangor, Maine, disliked being in the room with the ugly heathenish thing. But Blanche pronounced it a most beautiful lady, and Kow Li owed half his firm place in the small invalid's heart to the skilful stories he told her of Kwan Yin-ko—and a weird jumble of mythology, fairy-tales and pure lie he made them! But they gave the English child infinite delight, and Ivy Gilbert many a refreshing half-hour of sleep out in the next room on Sên King-lo's sofa.

Sên himself slept now at his own Legation and at the Snows'. Sir Charles and his wife came and went, and so did Sên King-lo; but Ivy lived in Sên's rooms —while Blanche stayed there. Emma Snow had begged to share Ivy's care of the child; but her grief and anxiety made her too tearful for medical approval, and the doctors limited her comings, and the nurses speeded her departures, while Blanche, with baby ruthlessness, made it clear that it was "mine own Nivy" she wanted.

The nurses had a sinecure. Miss Gilbert and yellow Kow Li usurped their office. In less than a week the night nurse and the Chinese Goddess parted company, and the day nurse went out more and more and knew well enough that she was there for a social reason, and as a fall-back-on, should the need occur, but that Ivy was in charge. And being a sensible girl, born and bred in New York and well paid, the day nurse did not care in the least.

Their small encounter with half-tipsy Reginald Hamilton had marked an advance in the comradeship of the

Chinese man and the English girl. It had so impelled Ivy more than it did Sên—naturally. The accident to the children drew both to a stronger liking, and Sên to a new understanding.

He had saved the two little lives, there was no question of that—Charles and Emma knew it and said it, and so did two physicians and three policemen, and the newspapers underlined it. And Ivy had seen him do it. He had had to wear his left arm in a sling for a day or two.

She had seen his strength again—no doubt now about those delicate hands of his—but she had seen something of that before, and his courage and cool-headed resource had not surprised her. To her it had seemed as much a matter of course that he had proved brave and clear-witted as it had to him to swing tipsy insolence down to the snowy roadway.

But *he* had seen a new woman, a new womanliness. He had seen the love as well as the pain on her face as she had bent down to the mangled baby out there under his window, and had gathered it up into her arms.

They two had been alone with the injured children a long quarter of an hour that had seemed longer, before the doctor had come, or even Kow Li, who had gone on an errand. Both had some skill at "first aid"—he much more than her—and he had seen the grit with which she had held the broken arm in place while he did the little he could for the crushed little leg; had seen the tenderness and strength with which she had soothed and controlled the pain-and-fright-broken mite; and had known that Ivy Gilbert's "flaw" had been the unjust creation of his own crass stupidity.

Chinese omniscience has its human limits. Sên

King-lo had learned that a woman is not necessarily unwomanly, or unloving of little children because she has little flair for blindman's-buff and leap-frog, and even less for "I am, thou art, he is" and "three times three is nine."

CHAPTER XXVIII

SÊN let himself in quietly; the doctors forbade knocking or ringing—Blanche *might* be asleep. His sitting-room door was open, and he glanced in cautiously as he stood in the hall, a little shyly—in case a girl dozed or lay on the chesterfield. Lady Snow had asked him to call here for her at three, and it was just on three.

No one was in the sitting-room. There was not a sound in the place.

So Lady Snow had succeeded in taking Miss Gilbert out for an hour, as she'd told him she was going to try to do. And only Kow Li was in there with Blanche, who must be sleeping, because she wasn't talking and neither was Kow Li.

The door into the bedroom, his own room—but Blanche's now—also was wide open. Sên tiptoed to it. He'd take a peep at the sleeping baby and beckon Kow Li out, if she hadn't clutch-hold of his hands or his sleeve as she so often had. Sên rather thought he'd have to give Kow Li to Blanche next Christmas.

Sên King-lo paused at the sill of his bedroom door, rooted there by a force he never had felt before.

He knew.

Baby Blanche was fast asleep.

But Ivy was not.

She knelt by the bed, all the sweetness of girlhood unspoiled, all the motherhood-love in the face she bent

over the child that slept in her cradling arms, baby head on maiden breast. And Kwan Yin-ko up on the wall, was guarding them both.

And Sên King-lo knew.

A great light came into his eyes. A sudden beat under his ribs made a vein on his forehead swell and throb, quivered his lips; and all his being rushed to the kneeling girl.

As quietly as he had come in, he turned and went, and went from the house, an up-to-date Washington flat that was a sanctuary now.

He knew his own secret now, knew it as completely and as surely as he had learned it suddenly.

Nature had torn a veil aside, and a man had looked in.

He had seen his own soul, and he knew that if ever life gave him a child—a girl-child, perhaps, to bear his mother's name—he but now had seen its mother—an English girl kneeling beside his bed.

He walked away from the city, taking his course to the woods across the river.

He knew the bar—the impossibilities—the disaster and petty, sore frets that passionate disobedience must bring. He knew and believed all this as no untraveled girl could. To call a halt to her heart Ivy had only instinct and a convention for which she had lost respect—had lost it because of what she had found in him. He had conviction, China, thousands of years. The bar that she had come to think but inconvenience and problem, a drawbridge of race that *might*—were the motive enough—be lowered or raised, was to him an impenetrable, unsurmountable wall—the Greater Wall of China, with never a breach or loophole in its everlasting imperial masonry.

If ever his puissant, virile manhood—the wholesomeness and sweetness of his being—the heritage his fathers had given—pulsed to manhood's gravest sacrament, life's perfect fulfilment, he had seen today—there in his room, the mate of his being, the core of his soul, his children's mother.

And she was forbidden.

Did she suspect?

Could he have taught her to care? English Ruby! *English!*

What was he going to do about it?

Elenore Ray could have told him.

CHAPTER XXIX

SÊN KING-LO gave a cry; a thousand words could not have said more.

Ivy and he had lunched at Miss Julia's—blind Miss Julia—and were walking home through the woods, at least as far as the river. They might find a cab near the bridge, or, if not, they could take a street-car there.

Here in the quiet old wood where two months ago he had brought his new revelation, to be alone with it, to creep into Nature's rest, to lift his eyes to the sky and the darkling hills, to cool his burn and still his soul amid the trees where now buds swelled and hidden sap lifted, to wash and clean his hands and his spirit in the crisp air that whispered of summer—they loitered a time because it was so beautiful here, and because they were together.

June flowers grew in the grass; a beryl and cinnabar sky crowned and mantled the world. The trees were heavy and big with leaf, grave and gay with a score

of greens. Bees hummed to the wild roses. An old apple-tree, late but lusty of blossoms, buffeted and bent by a thousand gales—but its good roots held—lay prone on the ground. Its flowers lay a perfumed white and rose veil heaped on ferns and hare-bells. A baby squirrel sat bolt up on the prostrate gnarled trunk, industriously washing his baby face. The summer air had a score of scents and bore on its fragrant warmth one message. And married birds were teaching their babies to fly.

They ought not to have come here—the man and the girl who had grappled their wills to renouncement—not here to this perfumed place of fulfilment.

It was here that Sên King-lo had brought his new joy and sorrow one late afternoon in April—had sat an hour where the cleanly squirred sat now, and had fought his first round in his battle with self.

He had made up mind and purpose then in the only way he could. Marriage between him—Chinese—and an English girl, even if he could win her to it, which he believed he could not—must not be; should not. And from that he never had wavered, did not waver now. He had thought it all out bit by bit and had made his paramount resolve, and little by little the plan of his nearer days. Since he might not ask what he most craved, he would hold but the faster, while he might, to what he already had: friendship and sweet welling companionship. He never could marry; it was written; and because it was, he would garner every dear memory he could to comfort his years. But again and again the dream came of an English Ruby sitting in firelight and garden—*his* firelight, *his* garden—while his eyes played with her hair. He knew it a dream. He would not, if he could, have it a fact. But he knew he would

keep it forever and dream it again and again while his years lasted. Take it home with him some day and dream it again when he sat a childless old man on the banks of the Yellow Sorrow.

They ought not to have come here or lingered.

Sên King-lo knew his own strength; but, Chinese though he was, he did not know Nature's.

"What a ripping old hero," he said, pointing down to the prostrate tree, "game to the last." He gathered her a spray of the rosy apple-blossoms and buds and filched for his coat another. "We must come here—in September. The apples that grow on so brave a tree should be good—full of tang, like wine. We'll eat them in September. It's a bargain?"

"But I am going home in August," she told him and added lightly, though her lips felt stiff, "Didn't you know?"

Sên King-lo gave a cry.

Their eyes met.

There was neither China nor England—nor Virginia. There was only a man and a girl—and Nature: in all the world nothing else.

"You must not go—from me," he said. "I cannot live without you. You are my life." He held his arms out to her with a gesture that pleaded—but claimed.

Ivy took a step towards him.

Sên King-lo did the rest. He wrapped his arms and his love about her. He laid his face on her face.

Presently he whispered words in her ear—Chinese words. She knew none of them—but she did not hear them as strange.

He cupped her face in his hands and put it from him a little, that he might learn it again, that his eyes might speak his love to her eyes.

And her eyes did not falter. They took what he gave.

"Will you come *home*—with me—some day—to China?"

"To the end of the world," she told him. She had not spoken before.

And he took her back into love's tender, reverent crushing, his face against her face.

There was neither England nor China, nor Virginia: there was only Heaven.

A gray cloud darkened the beryl and cinnabar sky. The Potomac ran colder.

CHAPTER XXX

WASHINGTON was delighted; so were the papers —and proclaimed it. Things were a little dull in newspaperdom just now, and the Anglo-Chinese engagement was a savory tit-bit capable of being served up in a number of ways, and was. Dick and Blanche were in an ecstasy, and girls Ivy scarcely knew touted shamelessly to be her bridesmaids. Every one was surprised, which made it all the more exciting. Every one, with only three exceptions: Lady Snow, Dr. Ray and Kow Li. Even Emma Snow was a little surprised, but not so the Chicago physician and Sên's Chinese manservant.

It had been expected long ago; but it had hung fire so long that Washington society had quite made up its mind that there was nothing in it beyond a friendship too long-drawn-out and too serene to have even the zest of flirtation, and Lady Snow herself had come to lean to that opinion now and then. Until a June day and an old apple-tree had rent the veil, Sên and Ivy had kept

their mutual secret so well from each other that it was scarcely surprising that they had balked others of it.

Not many in Washington approved, but most were pleased—a very different thing—and the papers were honestly grateful.

It came with all the toothsome surprise of an unforeseen sensation. And the wedding would be great fun. Would they be married at the Church of the Ascension? Was Sên King-lo a Christian? Nobody seemed to know. Or would they take Convention Hall or the Lafayette Square Opera House and be married on the stage with Chinese rites by Chinese priests, with posture girls at the back and tom-toms in the orchestra, and fire-crackers for confetti? What fun!

Truck-loads of Chinese junk, real and imitation, poured in on Ivy from mere acquaintances, and from a number whom she had not met, but was going to meet now—if *they* could contrive it. Lucille Smith sat on the doorstep, and for days Ivy had to stay indoors to avoid reporters and camera men—even the back-door and the tradesmen's gate were "watched"—and Sên King-lo was photographed every time he came to see his fiancée, which was often.

But if the four hundred and the outer thousand were pleased and palate-tickled, a handful of others, and they more nearly interested, were not.

Julia Calhoun Townsend was ill with rage and disgust. Charles Snow was anxious and bitterly anxious too. The Chinese Minister didn't like it, but told no one so. Kow Li didn't like it at all, but only told an opium pipe—a very harmless opium-pipe. Uncle Lysander was enormously shocked and disgusted, and he lost no time and spared no pains in noising it abroad that he was. Elenore Ray and Emma Snow stood by

Ivy, and the little they said to outsiders was in approval; but at heart neither approved, and each was sorry, Lady Snow the more so and the more acutely. With Elenore Ray an eager scientific and psychological interest somewhat dulled her personal and friendly anxiety.

Julia Townsend writhed. She closed her doors to Sên King-lo and to Miss Gilbert and told them so in frigidly phrased notes written in the third person. A week later she sent for them both—separately—and pleaded and argued. She stormed and wept at Sên King-lo. Ivy came in for most of the pleading, though Sên had his share, and it was to Ivy that she said the hardest and the more questionable things, for she could not quite break the reticence of generations in speaking of intimate things to any man.

Miss Julia quarreled with Dr. Ray because Elenore Ray would not altogether condemn or at all ostracize, and Sir Charles Snow very nearly quarreled with his wife—and that he did not quite do so was Emma's fault, not his. He was wretchedly unhappy about it.

Miss Julia hurt Ivy a little and angered her bitterly—but accomplished nothing, lost a friendship and didn't score a point. Sên King-lo she did not anger at all; venomous speech is a Chinese privilege of old age and of women—and Sên King-lo valued her words, not for what they said, but for the kindness that he knew had forced her to speak them; he remembered all her gracious motherliness of years to him, the exquisite, pathetic motherliness of child-deprived and aging spinsterhood. He was neither hurt nor angered, and his gratitude and his affection held. But some of her words and the truth they spoke troubled him. He could not brush them aside, and he could not forget them. Sên King-lo knew the risk he was taking—far better than Miss Julia could.

She guessed it a little, spurred by prejudice to state it sourly. He knew it; both his intelligence and his honesty acknowledged it; his courage accepted it. He accepted it, gladly even, now for himself. But—for Ivy? Was the risk he was going to let her take too cruel, too close a risk? Such a marriage would have its pricks, and sometimes its scourge. He had no doubt of that. Could he keep every prick and scourge for him alone, keep them *all* from her? He said "Goodbye" to Miss Julia as affectionately as she would permit, more sadly than he would show. And his heart had a heavy ache as the door of Rosehill closed behind him forever, and he went through Rosehill's gate for the last time.

Every goodbye has its tinge of sadness. We know the ills we have; not the ills to come. The released prisoner throws a long last look at his gaol as the warder locks him *out*. To say goodbye to old friendship, old kindness, old welcome is hard and sad indeed. It cuts.

Sir Charles took it harder than Julia Townsend did but attacked it more gravely and kindly, more gently. But he did his utmost.

To Emma his wife he showed his rancor and a little his tingling spleen. He went among his colleagues grimly. But to Sên King-lo he showed only his sorrow and anxiety and his friendship, and even more considerately to Ivy.

But he spoke.

He spoke to her with his hand on hers; but for all his cousinly kindness and all his diplomatic care, he angered her even more than he hurt—and he hurt. And he failed. He had expected to fail.

But he hoped not to fail with Sên King-lo.

that I can take, or will. If your cousin—you have spoken to her, of course, or will——"

"I have spoken to Ivy," Snow told him grimly, "and made matters worse, if I did anything. She'll not budge an inch. But you—you are reasonable. You will listen to what I have to say?"

"To every word of it and as long as you like."

Snow plunged into his arguments—most of them the old ones that every student of "East and West" has heard again and again, and that dozens of pens have twisted and turned into well-grimed shreds. And, quite without offensiveness, he cut very much deeper into physical things—revulsions, apparent, if not actual, abnormality, and so on—than often a pen has dared to do.

In some points, Sên agreed; most he rejected or claimed to be outweighed.

"I saw it as you do, on the whole—until—the other day," he admitted; "but I see it differently now."

"You would," Sir Charles said with a smile that was grim but patient and not unkind.

"I did not know—not until a short time ago—how it was with me. It took me quite by surprise."

"It frequently does."

"I was a dunce, of course, not to know where I was drifting."

"We always are——"

"But when I found out and looked it in the face—I did do that—I firmly determined to——"

"Cut it out?"

"Yes, just that! And then—the other day——"

"It ran you out."

Sên nodded. "And now," he added, his face radiant, "I cannot give Ruby up!"

"Or think you can't," Snow insinuated. "So you call her Ruby! I like it best, and it suits her too. There is not much of the clinging vine about her, I think, and I assure you there was none at all yesterday when I attempted to say to her less than a tenth of what I have said to you."

Sên laughed—rather proudly. Sir Charles Snow's affectionate smile was grimmer.

"I'm afraid I've filched your own name for her," Sên King-lo said. "I too think it suits her the better, and it's the name I've always cared for most—it was my mother's name."

"By Jove!" Snow murmured, and added under his breath, "I'd forgotten that."

Sên King-lo looked up in amazement from the match he was striking, and his eyes were not pleased. How came this Englishman to have heard that? A Chinese gentleman does not name his wife to another man—and in China her children may not speak it.

They smoked on in silence. Sir Charles was musing.

"Are you a Christian?" he asked suddenly.

"No," the Chinese told him, "though I was confirmed at Public School—they made it part of the 'course,' as they did cricket and footer—and I took it all as part of the 'English' I was there to learn." He added, but with absolute courtesy, "Are you?"

"I believe in God," Snow said stoutly.

"So do I."

"But not in our God, not in hers!"

"I think I do," Sên King-lo assented. "I believe that there is only one God—many gods, but only one God. Does it matter what we call him? I think not. Or matter how we reach him? I can't believe it. And, on my soul,

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"I think I do," Sên King-lo assented. "I believe that there is only one God—many gods, but only one God. Does it matter what we call him? I think not. Or matter how we reach him? I can't believe it. And, on my soul,

I don't believe that there is much difference between any two religions that are both sincere and devout."

"Would you say that in China?" Snow demanded quietly.

"I hope so," Sên King-lo replied, "if I had any reason to do so, to any one who had the right to ask. There still are parts of China, of course, in which it wouldn't be altogether safe to whisper it even—not for a Chinese to do so—and in them I should not go out of my way to megaphone it. We have not, as it happens, spoken together about religion—Miss Gilbert and I; but I shall not try to convert her to any one of our old Chinese religions. I can promise you that. And they are crumbling fast. Christianity's the coming religion of China."

"I don't believe it."

"I do," Sên persisted. "And why not? It is an Oriental faith—as every great faith has been and is—from Zoroastrianism to Christian Science—Spiritualism thrown in, if you like, and the faith of the Friends."

"Admitted. Well, I won't pretend to think that religious difference is the principal bar. But tell me this, Sên: had your mother been living, would you have asked my cousin to be your wife?"

"No," the other answered promptly. "I would not hurt my mother or deceive her."

"Would you take an English wife to China?"

"No—I've thought that out, and I would not—not yet at least. The time is not ripe—but it's coming."

"I doubt it."

"I intended to live my life out in China. Even the other day, I asked her if she would let me take her there."

"You needn't tell me what she answered. I know."

"Of course."

"She'd go like a shot and be infernally miserable after she had. The East is paradise for European women, unless they are married to Eastern men, and then it is hell."

"Precisely. And that is why I shall not go back to China."

"You always have wished to?"

"Intensely. But everything is changed now. A man's work must go on, of course——"

"It should," Snow interjected.

"And I may need to make flying visits now and then —sure to, I think—but she shall not come. England shall be our home."

"That will be a sacrifice," Sir Charles began.

"Yes. But I shall be glad to make it. I intend to make them all. And they'll not cost me much—for that matter. They can't, for—she is all the world to me."

Charles Snow knew better than that. But he knew that Sên King-lo meant it, and he let it pass.

"Have you thought of your children? Yours and hers?"

"Desperately hard," Sên answered, gravely. Snow had drawn blood at last.

"It will be worse for them than for her or for you," he urged.

"It would be, in China," Sên agreed sadly.

"Damnable!"

"Our children shall be English."

"Half-English," the other reminded him. *"Eurasians!"*

Sên King-lo flushed a little. His Chinese soul winced at that word. Snow had meant that it should. But he was sorry to thrust so at Sên King-lo, here in the room —Snow's own room—where they had smoked so many

"peace-pipes" and held such intimate and cordial conference.

Charles Snow saw that the other's face was troubled now, but he saw no receding.

After a moment he rose and unlocked a drawer in a tall cabinet—the only Chinese thing in the room—and came back with a small oval thing in his hand. "No one but I ever has looked at it," he said with one hand on Sên King-lo's shoulder, "since the day it was given to me." And he laid the miniature down at Sên's hand.

Sên King-lo saw the face of a very beautiful Chinese girl painted on the oval of ivory, and painful color crimsoned his face.

"My mother," he said huskily. For an instant his eyes were enraged.

"No," the Englishman replied quietly, going back to his chair, leaving the miniature on the smoking-table between them. "Your mother's sister. Her milk-name was 'Lotus.' "

"The nun!"

"She was not a nun when I knew her," Charles Snow said.

"I have seen your mother, too, Sên King-lo," he added presently, "both as a girl in her father's home and as a wife in her husband's."

"I never saw her!" Sên Ruby's son said sadly.

"They were very alike—the sisters."

"Very," Sên agreed. "I have a miniature of my mother, here in my rooms, that might almost be this. My father gave it to me, from his robe, as he died."

"They were painted by the same brush," Snow told him. "I have seen *your* miniature, Sên King-lo. Their father trusted me, and so did yours."

Sên gave his English friend a filial look.

"I am going to tell you the story. I thought it was shut away in my own keeping forever, but I am going to tell it to you—now."

"If you'd rather not——"

"I'd much rather not. But I must. I am going to tell you what I'd far rather keep an old locked sweetness —a far away thing, but my own—going to tell it in my final attempt to save you and my cousin from the hideous mistake and life-long misery from which your grandfather saved me and his daughter years ago."

The two children's voices in happy clamor rang out in the hall, and their mother's voice joined in, laughing.

"I have loved but two women, desired but two, in all my life, Sên King-lo."

"I, only one," the Chinese said gravely.

"You are young," the older man told him, gently, a kindly twinkle in his blue eyes. "I love my wife very dearly, Sên——"

"I know that, sir." And he knew also that, whatever this unexpected story which Charles Snow was about to entrust to him, there was no discredit in it—a perfumed breath of the long-ago, no slightest stench of any time or place.

Sir Charles Snow told it slowly—pausing again and again—striking a match, drawing a whiff of smoke from his cigarette. It is not easy for Englishmen to tell such stories at all.

"The second year I was in China, I spent two months in a monastery that lay on the edge of your grandfather's place—a friend or two with me for part of the time, for the rest alone. The monks had an excellent cook—or one of them was—and a good bottle or two. They, good men, were no sour zealots."

Sên King-lo smiled.

"I came and went as I would and did as I liked. It was liberty-hall for me, that old monk-kept inn, in the pines on the hill. There were no other guests. It was rest and peace and relaxation—perfect that—until I held a Chinese girl in my arms. Yes, King-lo, I have held a Chinese nun in my arms—and," a queer, tender smile in his grave eyes, "your mother, too."

But Sên King-lo only smiled back with a tranquil face.

"One afternoon I was squatted with a book at the edge of the pines, nearer your grandfather's house than I was to the monastery, reading a little, doing nothing most of the time—*being,* not doing at all. The sun was setting—I can see it now. Looking up from a page—it was Han Yu, by the way—I saw a plume of flame lick up from the low, widespread, red-roofed house, and then —the day was very still—I heard a girl cry. You know what things of old wood most Chinese houses are, and how they burn if once they start."

Sên nodded. He knew. All China knows.

"I ran, of course—no ceremony then between me and the devil-guards on a Chinese man's forbidden gate. I pelted in and I carried two Chinese girls out—they didn't weigh much, the pair of them. They were very like their pictures. . . . The servants ran about like tipsy rabbits and were of no possible use."

Sên nodded again. He found that easy to believe.

"It turned out that all the men of the family were miles away—hunting. And my idea of what was best to do with those two little things in my arms was—well, hazy. I didn't speak Chinese then quite as well as I did afterwards, and the gibbering servants knew no Mandarin. At least, if they did, they didn't trot it out then, and their language was completely new to me. I didn't quite know what to do with those girls. One

giggled—your mother—" Sên smiled—"the other cried. Ivy's laugh has reminded me of your mother's sometimes."

Sên looked at him curiously, but Snow did not bite his lip—propaganda forgotten—for he and his cigarette were far away, living again an old love-story. A song of Grieg's came from the drawing-room. It was Ivy's touch, Sên King-lo knew, but Charles Snow did not hear.

"So—I took them to the monastery. There was a small consternation, but the top monk cleared out of his cell, heaped it with the best things in the place—rugs and cushions and things—and there they slept. Their women were with them, and some score of the men servants and coolies jabbering and smoking outside, while I did sentry-go outside the cell door, and the fraternity told their rosaries and chanted their prayers half through the night.

"We lived there for four or five weeks—all of us, your grandfather and his four sons—a runner found them the next day, and they came hot-haste. The service I'd done wasn't much, just carrying two little things kitten-light, and not much more than kitten-big, from under a roof that was blazing to one that wasn't—nothing but that and keeping my head while a gang of 'the babies,' as your people call their retainers, completely lost theirs; but the father made a mountain of it Omi-high. Chinese gratitude is gigantic—always. We lived there together as one family, I as free of the two girls as their brothers were, and when a new house was run up near where the other had been—your grandfather made 'the babies' work like Egyptian slaves—he made me welcome there, and I was as free to go into the 'flowery' courtyard and garden as their own brothers were; and I did so very much oftener than they did.

He could not have allowed any Chinese man what he allowed me. He held that the race-bar put me as much out of personal bounds—as far as his daughters were concerned—as if I'd been the man in the moon. They might have married a vase or a man dead and cremated; but they could not marry an Englishman, and the thought of such a thing could never arise. He was right, and he was wrong. So I stayed at the mandarin's home rather more than I did at the monastery—sat in the courtyard with the tulips and musk while Lotus tweaked her lute and Ruby sorted her silks and 'pulled the flowers up' in the silk on her loom. They were very alike—so alike that some of the servants, and the brother who saw them least often, could not always tell them apart; but I always could. The lady Ruby had the prettier laugh—a tinkle of silver bells—carried her head the prouder; Lotus had the softer eyes, her hands were a shade the tinier, her mouth had the longer bow—and I had touched her hand by chance, as it lay on my coat the time of the fire, and once again when we'd reached on one impulse to gather narcissus that grew by the brook where the monks caught their breakfast trout. I learned more Chinese in those four weeks than I'd learned in two years. . . . The usual thing happened—to both of us. It was a dream—a courtyard madness. But I planned to keep it. And one day, by the lily-pond, I touched her hand again and told her. And her eyes answered me until they fell from mine, and then their lids answered me—they were trembling, and her fingers fluttered and answered me too. I knew that I should never return to England but stay always in China. . . . When I told her father—I went and found him and told him then, leaving her alone there by the lily-pool. . . . I never saw her again. When I told

him, his amazement was terrible. He was kind—very kind. But he convinced me. He shattered my dream. He showed me the thing I contemplated as the monstrous impossibility it was. In my reason, I think, I thanked him even then. He saved two lives from misery and lasting regrets. I know it now. And I never look on my children or hear them at play that I do not thank him. I left Pechilli that same day. And I never have been there again. Two years later when she 'took the veil'—I forget what it's called in China—she wrote me a letter—her last day at home—out in the courtyard—a little red letter. Your grandfather gave it to me in Pekin. I have it still. I have not looked at it for years, but I have kept it. I do not know if she lives——"

"Yes," King-lo said softly—there were tears in his eyes—"an abbess, happy and loved. I saw my aunt the last time I was at home."

"Thank you. I am glad to know. . . . And your grandfather gave me that miniature. A great portrait-painter—the greatest of that day—a woman—had painted it and one of her sister for him, and they were among the few things that were not burned. An old blind servant had had the wit to snatch them, as he ran, knowing how his master valued them. This is the one your grandfather gave me. The other you have—I have no doubt it is it. Your father showed it to me. After your mother's marriage, being in Ho-nan, I called on your father—your grandfather had asked me to do it. Sên Wo T'ring made me very welcome, and took me at once to your mother where she sat in her courtyard, working flowers on a tiny coat—her women about her. She sent them away and presently he left us—alone. I was there for an hour,

and she gave me her hand and a rose for my coat—I'm afraid I haven't it now—when your father went with me to the outer gate. He was a very gracious gentleman, your father, Sên King-lo. But he would not have taken me into his wife's courtyard if I had been Chinese —or your mother have given me her hand and a flower. You were born the next week. I never saw Sên Ruby again. But Sên Wo T'ring I saw often. Because of what your grandfather had told him, because I had carried your mother from a house that was burning, and, I think, because Sên Ruby had asked it, he held me his friend. And I held him mine and valued it greatly. . . . I want to stand his friend today, and hers, and yours. Sên King-lo, for the love of the dead, for the sake of the unborn, and in pity of them—give it up!"

"I am sorry," Sên King-lo said earnestly; but his face was set firm, and Sir Charles Snow knew that he had failed.

"Shall we ask Lady Snow to give us some tea now?" was all he said.

"Not today, thanks very much," was Sên's answer. And they parted then with a grip of their hands.

Sir Charles Snow sat for a long time with the old miniature in his hand. Then he locked it away and went to romp with his children and chat with his wife until the dressing-bell rang.

CHAPTER XXXII

SIR CHARLES had meant well, and so had Miss Julia; but the result of their united effort was that they hastened it on. It has happened before.

It was Ivy herself who, though she did not directly say it, showed Sên clearly that she wished it so.

She was unhappy at her cousin's. Emma Snow was all that was kindest. But Sir Charles could not hide his displeasure and the something too of shame that he felt. He did not blame Sên King-lo as much as he felt that he ought. He saw great excuse for Sên King-lo —for his impulse, if not for his stubborn persistence. Men loved. It came and it went. But it had to come. Shut off from his own people, debarred from the women of his race, it was inevitable that his manhood should turn to some one of the women among whom he lived. And Sir Charles appreciated what Ivy's appeal and lure had been—appreciated it all. Desdemona, on the stage, usually is golden-haired and tea-rose faced. A finer art would show her Venetian dark. Sir Charles heard the Chinese note in Ivy's laugh and knew that the colors she oftenest wore and the dangling things she instinctively thrust in dress and hair had a Chinese touch—and how that must be in Sên King-lo's eyes. Although she did not know a *taotai* from a *compradore,* a *hong* from a *pai'fang* or a *k'o-tang,* a *tong* from a *yamên,* yet he now and then heard a Chinese sentiment from her English lips, caught a Chinese trend and bias in her mind. Her sensitiveness was as Chinese as it was girlish. Her love of flowers and that she liked one or two or a spray far more than she did a mass of them, her fondness for stringed-instruments—the harp was more to her than the piano or organ—her interest in handwritings, and a dozen traits, small enough singly, were not unlike those of the Chinese. Her horror of debt—he never had known her to owe a farthing—her pride and her quick sense of humor were more general in China than they were in England. He could understand Sên's madness, even while he steeled his soul not to condone it.

But he saw no excuse for Ivy. To him she seemed the victim of wilful and headstrong infatuation. Sên King-lo was a rich man, and Snow partly realized how the girl loathed her poverty. But he was just enough to know that in this she had given dollars and cents no thought. And there were rich men and to spare here in Washington and at home in England—and Ivy had beauty, personality and charm. Of course she wished—whether she knew so or not—to marry. Every nice girl did—and should. But an English girl as nice as he had believed his cousin to be would have lived forever unwedded and childless, rather than marry an Oriental. He had not forgotten Lotus; but he had been a boy then, and she not much more than a child who never had seen a man of her caste but not of her blood—until she had looked up from his arms into his face. And, too, that had been very different—love's young dream in a lotus-garden, the dream that all Nature and strange circumstances had conspired to make it. And he had had the sound sense and the stern British good taste to renounce it. And it had been a long time ago.

Ivy had lost caste with her cousin. And, in spite of himself, he showed it. And the girl, sensitive, proud and dependent, felt it intensely. They had been close friends, particular chums until now, and now they were merely a disgusted kinsman and an outraged kins-girl.

Then, too, money was pinching her: the need and lack of it. Lessons were a thing of the past now. Emma Snow good-humoredly had insisted upon that and then regretted that she had, for Ivy flatly refused even a dime of Charles' money that she had not so much as pretended to earn. Her purse was empty, and she

needed new gloves. Emma missed seeing a ring and a brooch of Ivy's and suspected that she had sold them.

And most of all now the girl longed to get away from the house in which even her cousin's bread tasted bitter. She refused the dishes she liked best, stole many bits of needlework from Justine, and mutilated almost her last ten dollars to buy stuff she made into a little frock that Blanche didn't need, and counted how many of the meals she unwillingly ate its shop value would have paid for. She burned her electric light sparingly, bought her own stamps and used as few of them as she could, and walked to save street-car fares.

They were married in August—Sên King-lo was eagerly glad to have it so—and Washington society had no wedding-day treat.

There were neither bridesmaids nor cake. And they left Washington in an hour after. Sên King-lo had had no difficulty in arranging for an official transfer to London; for the semidiplomatic position he held under China's new Republic was elastic, a roaming brief when he chose, and its itinerary very much at his own discretion.

Earlier than social Washington often stirred from its beds, Sên and Ivy were married in a small quiet church in a small quiet tree-shaded street. And before Washington knew of the ceremony Mr. and Mrs. Sên were on the Atlantic.

Sên King-lo had wished intensely that Sir Charles Snow should give his cousin away and had urged it, jealous for her that she should come to her husband as English girls were accustomed to do. But Snow *could* not, and Ivy would not have allowed it.

So Abraham Kelly, wearing a flopping gray frock-coat and feeling as if his maiden aunt had caught him

at a game of draw-poker in a churchyard, gave Ivy away, while the Chinese Minister looked on with a beam on his face and rage in his heart.

No girl-friend was there. Only Emma Snow and Dr. Ray stood beside her, and, except the clergyman, no one else was there. There was no music. But for the ruby-red bud in Sên King-lo's lounge coat, there was not a flower, unless the red peppers he himself had bought at dawn at the market—and that Ivy wore in the little gray frock that Elenore Ray had given her—counted for flowers.

There were more old clothes than new in Ivy Gilbert's trousseau, and those that were new were Dr. Ray's gift.

From Emma the girl would take nothing, for Emma too had been a penniless bride, and Ivy would accept nothing for which Charles Snow's money had paid. Lady Snow was greatly hurt, but she understood and forgave.

It sounds a sad wedding and a drear one. But the man and the girl that stood at the altar were radiant-eyed. Neither had a doubt now.

They said goodbye in the vestry—the two women holding Sên King-lo's wife in their arms lingeringly—and she and he breakfasted alone in his rooms, to be dismantled now. Then Mr. and Mrs. Sên caught the next train for New York.

They dined alone. Ivy still wore her peppers dangling in a gown they matched, a red dress which—he had told her so now—he had thought like the wedding-dress of a Chinese bride, the night she had given him her confession-book.

Three days later they sailed for Liverpool. Mrs. Sên was glad to go; *she* was going home, and New York

had not been entirely comfortable. Washington necessarily is cosmopolitan and race-seasoned. No one had looked at her askance when she had walked its streets beside a Chinese friend or lingered with him in the Corcoran Gallery—unless the darkies who met them did. New York was different. Ivy thought that the man who served their meals was curious, and she had a tingling sense that the shop-discipline deferential courtesy of the clerk at Tiffany's was all for Sên's purse—less than none of it for their companionship. She thought that several passersby on Fifth Avenue looked at them odiously; twice she saw a lip curl, and once a woman laughed.

She did not regret Washington. But she was glad to leave New York.

The voyage was smooth, and her cabin was sweet with lilies that kept their waxen freshness and their intoxicating perfume well past-midocean.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THREE years had passed.

All had gone well with Mr. and Mrs. Sên. There had been tiny rasps, of course; but they had been very tiny and had gone almost as soon as they had come. And neither the man nor his wife had had a regret. Sên had been busy, prosperous and content—keen on his "job," proud of his wife, desperately fond of her still. And, if China had called to him now and then, he had kept it to himself. Ivy had had three years of happiness and good times, and she had enjoyed every hour of it. Her husband had proved the best of long-distance companions, and his intimate charm had even increased

with their days. London society, the grave and best, as well as the gay, had given them both cordial welcome, with never a shrug or the breath of a slur. Sên King-lo had a very long purse now, and he took a still boyish delight in having his beautiful wife dip into it. There was no question now of needed new gloves or homemade blouses and jumpers for young Mrs. Sên. They met great folk on a parity. Ruben, their baby, had his father's sunny temper and strong self-control, and though he had his mother's dark gold-brown eyes, straight-set, was almost a blonde: an Anglo-Saxon baby, deliciously and ridiculously fat, great pals with his father and very much in love with his mother.

They had a rambling old house, discreetly modernized, delightfully furnished, a skilfully "old-world" garden about it, Kensington High Street not much more than a stone's throw away, and a tiny rose-covered crib on the river. Their love had held and had grown, and their congeniality and mutual confidence were entire. Mrs. Sên had left almost her last annoyance on Fifth Avenue and at Tiffany's—and only two had come to her since, both so small that they scarcely are worth mentioning, even if straws do have a reputed significance.

When the first bewitchery wore off, she discovered that she disliked her new name—and that it embarrassed her. And, believing her slightest wish her man's sacred law, she suggested modifying and (as she thought, though she didn't say it) "civilizing" Sên into "Senn." She even went so far on that road as to have visiting cards engraved "Mrs. K. L. Senn" and handed one to King-lo as he sat reading in her room after tea.

"Who is she?" he asked with a smile. "A new acquaintance or an old one who has found you again?"

His wife made him a very low bow. "Behold her!" she said.

He understood on the instant—and he sensed a chasm ahead, a yawning rent in their future.

But his face did not change.

He drew his wife down on to his knee, and, with his face on hers, told her that she might not rename herself "Mrs. K. L. Senn," nor anything else. How her wish to do it had cut him, he did not tell her, and she never suspected it even. She yielded, but she was vexed and disappointed. But she put the alias-cards in the fire and soon forgot all about it, disappointment and all. But Sên King-lo's hurt stayed.

And when she saw her name, as he and thousands of Chinese years had given it to her, engraved on the cards she ordered the next day, she decided that Sên had a *chic* of its own. (The venerable name, the honorable name of Sên, *chic!*) She grew fond of writing her name and took special pleasure and pains in making the tent-like accent and perching it as carefully and daintily over its "e" as she did a new toque on her beautifully dressed hair. And she found that its very unusualness made it a social asset—if a cheap one—in avid London; and revalued it for this. Her handwriting was as individual and almost as pretty as she was—and many more than her husband thought so—and her name as she wrote it looked particularly well. She always signed herself "'Ruby Sên." And Sên King-lo never asked her to write it "Sên Ruby." But he wished it.

The other small cloud was a name-cloud, too, and more permanent.

Mrs. Sen did not know what to call her husband. "King-lo" she did not care for—she thought it had a heathenish sound, and smacked of Limehouse laundries

—though she had the sweet good taste never to tell Sên so. "King" by itself she particularly disliked. "It would be too silly to call you 'King' all over the place when you're only a Mister. And I won't call you 'Sên,' for you are not a peer." She tried to invent a name of her own for him but couldn't find one. Finally she called him "Lo" thinking it funny and short and belittling at first. But she soon forgot that she had, and Sên thought its sound from her lips the sweetest sound he'd ever heard.

And beyond these two Ivy had never felt a shadow since she sailed from New York City in a jade-colored green dress that she had worn once at a Rosehill garden party.

The baby could not write its name yet—some five-months-old babies cannot—and no question had arisen as yet as to whether that important signature would be "Ruben Sên" or "Sên Ruben." Sên King-lo had named their firstborn, rather insisting on "Ruben" in place of the "Ruby" he had wished. But he realized that even a Chinese man—very probably a future great President—could not appropriately go through life and international preëminence under the winsome name of Ruby. But the father liked the sound of "Ruben" better than the mother did.

Ruby—the young mother—enjoyed her social popularity keenly, and neither she nor Sên suspected that it had grown even more from the estimate in which several eminent people held him than from the undeniable charm of her personality and easy adaptability. She loved her home, especially the rose-covered crib with only room for two. She enjoyed her husband's "vogue" and his cordial welcome in high places. But most of all she

loved her husband and child—and King-lo the dearer of the two.

No one looked at them with unpleasant surprise. London has an easy grace of the darker strangers within her imperial gates. And Mrs. Sên soon realized that in Mayfair there was more distinction than disgrace in being the English wife of Sên King-lo. And, whatever they thought or felt about it there, they were very kind to Mrs. Sên at Portland Place where the five-colors flag flew. She made his Chinese friends welcome and was sweetly cordial to them, and most of them liked her. The Chinese in London grow in numbers, and there are many of a birth and class that do not affiliate with Limehouse. But their home and home-life were English. Kwan Yin-ko hung beside their bed, and an old Chinese miniature of an older "Ruby" was locked away in Sên King-lo's own "den." But there was nothing else Chinese in the house. Few smart houses in Hampstead, Mayfair, Chelsea or Kensington but had more Chinese curios than the Sêns' had. It was both kind and wise of Mr. Sên, many sage folk said. But they misjudged him there. It *was* Sên's doing, not his English wife's; but it was a selfishness—almost his sole one. He did not wish too many material reminders about him of the homeland he had forsaken. England was his home now, and he did not intend ever again to be homesick for China, and he cut the risks of it as close as he could. But he still read his own classics, when he sat alone in his den, and the love-songs of Li-Po. A man cannot forgo the books that were the mother's milk of his soul.

And Sên King-lo still brushed many a letter to friends in Chinese—not all of them business letters. And he still sometimes played a game of chess with an

opponent in Shansi, and he often heard the Yellow Sorrow surge and creak—in his dreams as he slept.

But most of his nights were untroubled and dreamless, and whatever his sleep, he woke each day to a deeper and more tender love of the girl who lay beside him.

King-lo always woke the earlier. For centuries his people had waked at dawn, and the old race-habit stayed.

When King-lo woke he scarcely stirred lest he disturb her. Sometimes he drew a book from his bedside table and kept himself quiet with the volume's pages till she moved and he turned to greet her waking. But oftener Sên King-lo lifted his chin on an elbow-supported hand and watched and worshiped the girlish loveliness of the delicate face asleep on its pillow. He thought of the girl on whose face he had laid his face as they stood by an old fallen apple-tree, the girl he had taken to wife one early morning in a crumbling, dreary church, on an old-fashioned street—a church that had not been any god-place of his churchless people—in the crown-city of an alien people, the Queen City of the Potomac. Though he'd loved the girl well, and had dared to risk for her the convictions of his being and the future of all his years, in defiance of the instincts of centuries and the laws of his fathers, she had not been loved as he loved his wife resting beside him, sleeping safe and secure in his love and in the keeping of his manhood. Day after day Sên King-lo's soul kept a sacred tryst with the woman who slept happily there while the sun came back from China, going its way to China, rose over New York City, throwing splashes of gold over skyscrapers, Central Park, boat-busy river, "Flat Iron" and ocean.

They had had many a golden jaunt together—a month

in Venice, wonderful weeks in Spain, again and again a week in Paris—these married lovers and best of friends, before Ruben had come to call a halt to their journeying and make their London life more of a permanency than it had been. They had learned North Wales together and watched Windermere. No reasonable wife could have seriously asked more of marriage and husband than Sên King-lo had given her. And riant Mrs. Sên was a very reasonable and entirely contented woman.

CHAPTER XXXIV

IT had worked so well that, when the Snows had come home a year ago, even Sir Charles had wondered if Sên King-lo might not prove to have been wiser than he—if only they stayed in England. He wondered often now what Sên thought of so English-looking a son, what he planned for Ruben's future; but he himself —Sir Charles—saw some simplification of a vexatious problem, a sore racial complex, in the baby boy's Anglo-Saxon fairness and features.

There was little that Charles Snow would not have given or done to have prevented the Sên marriage, and he still winced at it—English prejudice and preconceptions are sturdy moral weeds—but as soon as it was sealed he wished it only well, bent his strength to its support, and did all he knew to regain the old footing between his cousin and himself. He wrote to Ivy the day after her marriage as unforced a letter as he could, and he wrote several longer, easier letters after she had reached Europe. But she answered none of them, and she made no response to any message he sent in Emma's friendly and cousinly letters.

He and Sên King-lo exchanged letters, not very frequently, but always cordially, though not with the verbal ardor of women. And when he and Lady Snow had come back to live in London and in the old place in Kent in which his mother and Ivy's had been born, and he walked into his cousin's drawing-room quite as if he knew she'd expect and wish him to, and simply would not be snubbed, she found it impossible to greet him as coldly as she thought he deserved. And after a first touch of frigid hauteur which he in perfectly good humor ignored, she took up their old friendliness, if not quite their oldtime friendship, again. And she soon found it easy enough to forgive him, almost to forget. It's a mean victor who cherishes venom, and Ivy Sên was the least mean of women. She and Lo had made good. Dear old Charlie had written himself down a goose. Who could be too hard on a goose? Not the happiest, proudest woman in England. And when she saw the look in the two men's eyes as they met, and saw the affectionate grip of their honest hands, her own eyes melted.

The four cousins had dined together at the Sêns', and the two women were discussing chiffons and babies and the sins of chauffeurs over a drawing-room fire—there were two fires in Ivy's long drawing-room—and the men were discussing tobacco, matters of international import, and a little whiskey in Sên's den.

As King-lo leaned over the narrow table to refill the other's tumbler, he said:

"It has come."

"Has it? That's enough soda. What has come?" But he knew before Sên told him, and Sên told him at once.

"The message from China. They want me at once.

By rights, I should go next week. I haven't told her yet. I don't know how she'll take it."

"Thoroughbred," Snow replied in a word.

"Superbly. But she won't like being left."

"You won't take her?"

"Of course not. The time isn't quite ripe, I think——"

Sir Charles Snow was sure that it was not even ripening and never would be, but he smoked on in silence.

"But," King-lo added hurriedly, "I may be wrong there. But we couldn't possibly take the young Lord Ruben home with us yet. *Two* messages came by the same post—this morning's early one. It isn't only that the bank needs me over there for a bit; but my grandmother tells me to come to her——"

"The devil she does," thought Sir Charles Snow. He knew those Chinese grandmothers—he knew what their suzerainty was and the ruthless way they asserted and enforced it. China might be a republic, but twenty republics couldn't clip the wings of one old hobble-gaited grand-dame who lived, shrill and impregnable, far off from the tourist-beaten paths.

"I *might* do the work at the banks by proxy, important as it is. But Sên Ya Tin must be obeyed."

Snow nodded. He knew that.

"And I couldn't think of taking the baby *that* journey. You know where we live. I don't see my son on that trip! The Yangtze in flood as like as not, local troubles in at least two of the provinces between Hongkong and home, shotguns in full action, and not a cow for miles. No, Sên junior cannot accompany Sên. I must leave them here."

He might or might not leave Sên Ruben, but her cousin felt sure that he was not destined to leave Mrs.

Sên. But again he kept his opinion to himself. He had "looked in" on Ivy's matrimonial affairs for the last time. It caused friction, and it availed nothing.

"I wish Ivy would come to us then," was what he did say.

"I wish she would," Sên replied. "It would be jolly for her in Kent with you. And splendid for the boy. But I don't believe she will. I think she'll wish to stay here in our own home and in the cottage."

"Shall you be gone long?"

"Hard to say. Five or six months, if not longer, I'm afraid. I must give things a thorough overhauling at Hongkong. We have a number of ramifications now, you know—in six of the provinces, and I ought to go myself to the end of them all. Then it will take some time to get home and come back from there. And my grandmother does not say for how long she will keep me with her—a day or two, perhaps, or it might be longer—weeks perhaps. I can't tell."

Sir Charles Snow wondered. It might be months perhaps! The venerable Madame Sên could tell, he knew; and he knew that she would.

"I suppose you'll tell Ivy as soon as Emma and I have gone?"

"No—in the morning," Sên replied. "She won't like it. I'd hate her to. And I don't like it myself."

"But you'll be glad to see China again—to be in China again?"

A light grew in Sên King-lo's face.

"Yes," he said, "I shall be glad to be in China again—for a time. It hurts to go from this, even for a time. Ruben will cut a tooth—learn to crawl, perhaps to stand. And I shall not be here to see it. And—it means a good deal to me to leave my wife—more than

it will to her—and she won't like it. But she'll have the boy. But I shall be glad to be in China again. I am glad that I am going back to China, to hear my own tongue spoken everywhere once more—once I'm well away from the polyglot treaty ports—to see the birds I used to know at their breakfast, to eat the old foods in the old way. I haven't snapped a melon-seed between my teeth for years, or seen a mango that *was* a mango, or a lychee that wasn't a petrified mummy—do you remember how the lychees taste when the wine of their ripeness is in them still?''

Snow nodded.

''And the mangosteens?''

''Only too well!''

''To see only Chinese faces once more—to be among my countrymen! Oh, I've been in exile, and sometimes I've found it bitter—often—until one day Miss Julia 'gave a party'—and Ruby was there——''

Sir Charles' face was very grave. He saw writing on the wall.

Sên King-lo went on with his home-going. ''To see the silk-worms gorging on the mulberry-trees, to see the red poppies growing—not much use for opium, but you remember the sea of color they make, lakes and oceans of it—and the fire-weed—to hear the sound the mallets make when they strike the bells—the gongs too—in the old temple courtyards that used to be my playground when I was a boy—'' He broke off and passed the decanter.

CHAPTER XXXV

SÊN KING-LO did not sleep that night, torn between two vibrant emotions—sorrow at the impending separation from his wife and joy to go home again.

Perhaps Ruby Sên caught in her sleep something of his double strain, for she woke as the first light filtered through their loose-drawn curtains; and her waking was sharp and instant, wide-eyed at once, which it rarely was. Usually she stirred and dozed, coming back very gradually to the life of brazened day, as the convolvulus sleepily unfurls its twisted spiral to the dawn. She was fast asleep—then, wide awake.

Sên King-lo turned and took her in his arms, and told her where he was going, when and why.

Her dark eyes sparkled with quick pleasure. But she exclaimed chidingly, "And that was what was in those two letters you had from China by the first post yesterday! And you've only told me now! A whole day wasted, and with all the packing to do in no time at all! Lo, you are simply wicked."

"Since when have you done my packing, Mrs. Sên? And I seem to remember that I not unfrequently have done yours. My mistake no doubt."

Ivy giggled and tried to shake him. There was an interlude.

"I shall not take much luggage," Lo told her.

"*Your* luggage!" his wife retorted contemptuously. "Two handkerchiefs and a razor and a book of poems —I know *your* luggage. But you don't imagine that I *and* Baby *and* Nurse are going half-way across the world with only one suitcase between us, do you?"

"Dear," her husband said very gently, "we couldn't

take Baby. It's too far, the way too hard, whole weeks of discomfort, if not worse—for you and him, I mean. I shall enjoy every rod of it, with my goat-legs—and home at the end of the journey. I never am ill, and, if I were, the smell of Ho-nan would be all the medicine I needed. But we can't take our frogling off of the doctors' beats."

"No!" the frogling's mother instantly agreed. "Oh—Lo—I shan't like leaving him behind. But—of course—for his own sake—but, oh! Lo—how shall we do it?"

"Of course not," he answered her quickly, with a hand on her hair, "so you'll have to stay with him, mother-girl."

Ruby Sên slipped from her husband's arms, thrust them gently but firmly away, and sat up on the pillows, eying her husband.

"I am going with you, Lo," she told him quietly.

"No," he said, a little tensely, "not this time. I can't take *you* to China *now*, heart of my heart."

"Why?"

"The time isn't ripe. You wouldn't be comfortable."

"I should be with you."

Sên King-lo thanked her with his eyes and with the touch of his hands. They were lovers still, these two who had ventured the perilous marriage.

But he persisted, "I cannot take you, dear. I'd rather give it up than do that."

"You want to go, don't you?" she asked quietly. "And you think that you ought?"

"I know that I ought. And I want to go more than I could tell you."

"But not to have me with you?"

"Always that. But not to *take* you with me. I must not."

Ruby studied the yellow flowers on the blue eider-down a moment and then turned her eyes again to her husband's and searched his face, laying her hand, and keeping it there, on his hand that lay on the lace below her throat. She said, "Are you *ashamed* to take me to China, Lo? Ashamed to have me there with you?"

Sudden color flooded the face of the Chinese man; but he answered her truthfully and fairly, as he always had and always would do.

In every marriage there must be something of sacrifice —and always it must be so, because the bonds that fetter human souls one from the other are eternal set—always have been and always must be—till we cross the River; and it is in the higher wedlock, the happiest union, most nearly perfected, that that sacramental sacrifice is the greatest and costliest. In the sacrifices to come it might be laid upon him to keep from her unsaid some of the thoughts that welled to his heart and vexed his mind —indeed already he had done so once or twice, eagerly willing to bear tenfold any trouble alone rather than to share it with her. But he never had lied to his wife in small things or great, and it did not occur to him to do it now in this hour of their intimate mutual testing. And though he would instantly, ungrudgingly, have sacrificed to her his life and things far dearer than life, he could not sacrifice even to her his word—and truth was a very part of his loyalty. There were white-skinned women in London—a few—who pitied Mrs. Sên, even while they sought her and made much of her—pitied her because she was the wife of an Eastern—but there were sadly few who might not have envied her had they

known the quality of her husband's loyalty—exquisite and absolute.

"Ashamed!" he repeated. "Never that! Need you ask?"

"What is it then?"

"Afraid. Afraid for you, dearest."

"Of what?" She would not let him off.

And he went on simply and bravely and left no blank in this confession "Afraid of slights and slurs. They might not come, but they might."

"Need we care?" she demanded, pressing a little the fingers under hers. "'Where MacGregor sits *is* the head of the table.'"

Sên King-lo made no reply.

"Slights from whom, Lo?"

"From my own people, perhaps."

She bent over him then, and something as a mother might. "'Thy people shall be my people,'" she crooned, "'and whither thou goest there also will I go.'"

Sên King-lo gathered his wife down to his breast and held her there. Neither spoke. The room was very quiet.

CHAPTER XXXVI

BUT Sên King-lo had no intention of yielding. And for several days they pitted their wills against each other, while Mrs. Sên went quietly on with her packing.

His Chinese will and her English will met and interlocked, and, because her will was a woman's, Ruby won.

Ruben went into the keeping of Lady Snow, "perfectly delighted to have another baby without any of

the preliminary unpleasantness," the overwatching care of his cousin Charles, with Dick and Blanche for special and voluble bodyguard; and the roses bloomed alone and unpruned on the tiny cottage, and Kwan Yin-ko lived alone in the Kensington house.

"Would you not like to live in China?" Mrs. Sên had asked her husband one day before they left London. "Make it our home, I mean? I have been thinking about it a good deal these last few days. You have been like a boy since you've known you were going back to China."

"Transplant my English flowers to the wilds of China!" Sên laughed.

"Ruben is only half-English," she reminded him, "and I am your wife."

"Ruben looks rather more English than you do," he retorted.

"That's no answer, Lo. Listen—" she put her hands on his shoulders and held them there. "I have been very happy here. It has been splendid. I've loved the fun of London and all the interest. But the one thing I *care* for is to be with you and the boy. Truly, Lo. I meant every word I said to you the other morning: every bit of me did. I don't care where we live. On my soul, I don't. Let us live in China—most of your business is there. Take me to your own home, Lo, and make me a Chinese woman."

He took her face in his hands. It was the only answer he made her.

"Wouldn't you like to stay in China?" she persisted. "We could come here for nice long visits sometimes. Shall we?"

Sên King-lo laughed oddly. "We'll try a trial trip first," was all he said.

It was left at that.

Baby Ruben was taken to Kent, the old room Ivy Gilbert's mother had been born in made his day nursery, with Jack and Jill, Little Bo Peep and all her sheep, the Cow with the crumpled horn and the Old Woman who lived in a shoe and found it crowded, newly papered on the walls. Old Father Thames, in very bright blue, meandered tranquilly beside them, with golden stars for Oxford and Maple Durham, for Windsor and Eton, and one very big star with two extra points for London town. Sên King-lo and Ruby his wife crossed the world together.

CHAPTER XXXVII

MRS. SÊN clapped her hands and the "boy"—a wrinkled-faced Chinese of sixty—brought in the teapot and the crumpets.

She had seen Lo's chair as the bearers carried it up the path, and she was sure he'd want his tea as soon as he could get it, after being coolie-jolted all the way from the Bund to the top of the Peak, this broiling, brazen day. She knew she wanted hers.

She frowned a trifle impatiently as she rearranged her tea-table a little. To Sung had forgotten the sugar again. Lo didn't take sugar here—but she did. Well, she'd not take sugar today, for Lo would be here in a moment now and, if she called the servant back to bring it, probably Lo would hear and see; and she didn't want her husband to know that To Sung had forgotten her sugar again—if he had forgotten it. It had infuriated Sên King-lo when it had happened once before. His face had blazed and he had hurled some terrible words at old To Sung, and Ruby had seen a Chinese side of

her husband that she never had seen before. To Sung had listened with an expressionless face to the torrid abuse and had gone for the sugar basin when Sên had ended. But only Mrs. Sên's insistence had saved him dismissal. "I thought you had to be deferential to every old person," she said as she sugared her half-cold tea. "Every rule has its exception, even in China," Sên had told her, "and I'll have no servant of ours forget the slightest service to you."

She did not dare, for poor old To's sake, to have Lo know that he had forgotten, or neglected, to bring her sugar again.

They were wonderful servants, these Chinese house-servants of hers, and the bungalow on the Peak ran on even smoother and more noiseless wheels than her admirable London ménage had: more tempting dinners even more perfectly cooked—service swifter and surer. But now and then some personal English need of her own was overlooked. And for all the expertness and well-nigh perfection, Mrs. Sén felt that it was a chillier service than that her London servants had given her. She ignored it, tried to believe that she did not know why it was, brooded over it rather, and hid it from Lo whenever she could.

It was the one small blemish in her delight in her new life in a new place, though she began now to wonder how soon people would begin to call.

"Young China" has done some remarkable things to Hongkong, if it has done nothing else. Sên King-lo found Victoria less to his liking than it had been. But Ruby, who was seeing her first of the Orient now, was entranced with Hongkong. It was all so unexpected, so unlike anything she ever had seen or imagined, that its every oddity and burlesque had a charm and seemed

a picture. She never really tired of the bizarre kaleidoscope of the Hongkong streets, but when she was a little satiated with the incredible medley and cram of the odd human mêlée and the narrow, sign-hung streets, she had only to rest her eyes on the boat-flecked water, or lift them for refreshment and delight that never failed to the Peak and its slopes; and always she had the home-haven of the bungalow and its hillside garden.

Sên saw it differently. Whatever his country had gained in freedom and in international grip, he had an appalling feeling that it had lost in beauty and in manners. And once or twice he felt that the soul of China was tarnished, and his taste, if not his reason, veered more and more to Sir Charles' attitude: "Would that the Manchu were back on the dragon-throne." It seemed to him that the new Chinese Democracy was overblown and that it was underbred. His countrywomen, that he saw everywhere in the city streets, hurt him almost intolerably. Chinese girls, no longer girlish, "walked out with their 'young men,' " girls so preposterously clad that conjecture often might leave their sex a toss-up, figures so absurd and meaningless that no comic paper in Europe would have reproduced them, or known what to call them if it had. Chinese women wearing spats and rakishly tilted fur caps, thin peek-a-boo blouses and scant tweed skirts cut half-knee high and violently patterned with checks so big that neither a "darky" woman nor a "nigger minstrel" would have worn them in St. Louis or Chicago, stood in strident groups on thoroughfare corners, discussing in shrill, unabashed voices diseases and "causes" of which the courtyard-sheltered woman never had heard. He saw one making a "book" at Happy Valley, he heard another call her escort "old bean," and when he heard two young

Chinese girls placidly discussing abnormalities, sex, and grimmer things with men not much older than they, and saw an undoubtedly respectable matron at a restaurant wearing a monocle and reading through it a French novel of which he would not have allowed Ruby to touch the cover, Sên King-lo felt that Ts'z-hi had died too soon, and all the sweetness and soundness of Chinese womanhood with her.

But he reflected that Hongkong always had been a drag-net for flotsam and jetsam, and he hoped and *prayed* that when he had journeyed on into the interior he should find his country less "advanced" and changed, the waters still clear and tranquil in the lily-tanks, the tulips and violets still at ease in the gardens, the wild roses by the bamboo-edged waysides still white and sweet. The emancipation of his traveled mind failed him a little, and his soul revolted hotly that East no longer *was* East.

His countrymen struck him as less changed in appearance, and less unmannered, than his countrywomen did; but he missed the costume he himself had not worn for many years. He missed old ceremonial greetings, old suavities, old detachment, and even the down-hanging queue and the tight braids of hair closely bound about half-shaven heads. Many a man with whom he had business offered him a whiskey and soda or a big cigar who yesterday would have given him a tiny bowl of tea or a long-stemmed, small-bowled, betasseled pipe. Sên King-lo was as homesick for China in Hongkong as he ever had been in Washington and was homesick in a sorrier way.

He always was glad to get back to the bungalow on the Peak which he had taken and furnished for Ruby through a cablegram sent from Vancouver. Sên King-lo

had not cared to take his English wife to a Hongkong hotel.

They had been in Hongkong several months now, during which time he had been away more than once on the bank's business, once with Ruby, twice without her. He did not intend to take her with him again when he went on a business journey. There had been a hint of unpleasantness for them—not between them —more than once on that one journey, hints that had reached him more clearly than they had her. He understood the language and the people; she did not.

She had amused herself comfortably enough on his two brief absences, and he would have been glad to hope that he might persuade her to remain in Hongkong when he went to Ho-nan to see his grandmother at his old home. Ruby had certain social assets here that could not be ignored or too ruthlessly discounted. The Governor was a lifelong friend of Sir Charles Snow's; his wife a distant relative of Lady Snow's; and in London Ruby and he had dined with them and they with the Sêns. It had not been possible for Mr. and Mrs. Sên to be excluded from Government House. And that gave her a chance of amusement which might, he thought, be a little more cordial if he himself were away. But Sên knew so well that his wife would not be persuaded to remain behind when he went to Ho-nan that, much as he wished it, he scarcely urged it. What was the use?

Sên King-lo began to see, faint but growing clearer, the same writing on the wall that Sir Charles had seen, and been aghast but not surprised to see, at Kensington.

Eagerly determined that this holiday and homecoming of his should be all Lo's, filled to the brim with all that would make it happiest for him and pleasant to re-

member, Mrs. Sên cared very little how many Europeans called on her or how many did not; but she was keenly anxious to know and "make friends" with Chinese women, that she and Lo might come and go among his Chinese friends, seeing them in their homes and in the Sên home. Sên had hoped to gratify her in this, believing that it would be easy enough under the change in woman's position in China. To an extent he had, but it hadn't worked.

Chinese ladies had called on Mrs. Sên—a few; two had invited her to lunch; and one, more emancipated perhaps, or perhaps more good-natured, or it even might have been under a husband's control, had gone so far as to bring her daughters with her the second time she called. She had dined once at the Sêns' bungalow and had once invited them both to dine with her husband and herself—on which occasion neither of her daughters had been present.

But all this visiting had been as barren to Ivy as Sên realized it to be perfunctory, if not, as he suspected, actually enforced. Ivy knew no Chinese. Only one of the Chinese ladies who had called upon her knew a few words of English. Great international issues may be reconciled and solved *via* interpreters, but feminine intercourse cannot be. The day Mrs. Sên lunched with Mrs. Eng-Hung, the English lady was provided with English cutlery; but its newness was assertive—almost a protest—and the hostess ate with chopsticks. When Mrs. Sên offered to shake hands with her Chinese women visitors, the palms that met her outstretched hand were instant and courteous but limp and irresponsive. And the husband of every Chinese woman that called even once either was under some large business obligation to Sên King-lo, or aimed to be. Several Chinese ladies

whom, through their husbands, Sên had asked to call upon his wife, did not do so. Sên had little doubt that Mrs. Ma T'en-k'ai had made her sudden journey to their country home rather than do so; and Ma T'en-k'ai was deeply in debt to Sên for financial advancement. Yen F'eng-hui, who owed more to Sên King-lo's influence than any other man in Hongkong did, frankly told King-lo that he would not permit Mrs. Yen to know an Englishwoman who had married a Chinese. He did not blame Mrs. Sên for being English, that would be absurd, since we all had to born where the gods decree. There were English ladies in Hongkong whom he would not forbid his wife to meet, though he had no wish that she should; but he held strong and unalterable views concerning such inter-racial marriages. He hoped that his honorable friend would pardon him. Sên King-lo did more than that: he liked Yen for his upright frankness, and courage—it takes courage to defy your banker—and Sên King-lo could not condemn Yen, who had never been out of their birthland, for feeling and saying stoutly what he himself had felt as strongly scarcely four years ago, he who had traveled far and wide, from whom long foreign sojourn and alien associations inevitably had rubbed off many natural angles.

So he did all he could to fill his wife's Hongkong hours pleasantly, to keep a sour thing from her. He knew that he would be glad when they were once more on the Pacific, with their steamer's prow turned towards the east.

Lo did not notice the absence of the little sugar-basin, and he drank his Chinese tea and ate his English crumpets in high contentment.

"They can't have done you very well at the Club today at lunch," Ivy said severely, as he passed his

cup for its second refilling and helped himself to a fourth macaroon.

"I had an excellent lunch," her husband asserted, "but not at the Club. I lunched and wined at the hotel with a lady."

"And she gave you the flower in your coat!"

"She did."

Mrs. Sên giggled. "You took Mrs. Yen out to lunch on the sly! Did you have a private room?"

"I did not," Lo said sadly, "take Mrs. Yen out to lunch. It would not have been permitted."

Ivy wanted a second cup of tea, but she would not take it for fear that Sên would miss the sugar-basin. She always took three lumps, and she knew that he always watched her hands. So she munched a sandwich instead and quenched her thirst with a mango.

"I lunched with a lady, though."

His wife knew that he wanted her to say: "Who was she?" and because she knew it, she said nothing.

And because she would not ask, he would not tell her—yet. They often played that game, and Sên usually won. If an English woman could wait, so could a Chinese man.

"Is the home mail in, Lo?"

"No, not even signaled yet, dear."

Sên looked about the pretty room as he lit her cigarette. They had finished their tea.

"Ruby," he said, as he gave it to her, well and truly lit, "I believe you'd make home out of a soap-box and an old coffee sack."

"I'd try for you, Lo," she told him.

"I'll match this against any room on the island," he added.

"But you furnished it," his wife reminded him.

"Yes—by wire. But I didn't *make* it. You did that. I didn't rearrange it. I didn't put those flowers in that vase or Ruben's picture in its lacquer frame—" Sên broke off, silenced by a sudden grinding thought. He had seen and understood the look in Chinese eyes when they first had seen that photograph, had seen and quickly looked away. Ah well——

"But," he added, "I did bring the one perfect thing in the room, and put it here."

Mrs. Sên looked about her drawing-room in surprise. What had Lo actually chosen and bought that was here? Not the cabinet, not the screen, not the quaint and costly teapot with a writhing dragon for handle and a slender snake curled up asleep on its top, not the lovely cups with butterflies poised on the delicate rims and a dear little red "ladybird" inside each fragile cup. What—then she understood and giggled again —a pretty sound from her, if not a pretty word, and shook her clasped hands at him in the pretty Chinese way he'd taught her.

But not even for such a compliment (and they'd been married almost five years now!) would she ask the question he was waiting for her to ask.

"I lunched, all alone, with a lady," he said at last, "and she is coming to lunch with you tomorrow."

Still Mrs. Sên waited.

"You used to know her."

"Oh—some one turned up from London."

"No, from Washington."

Ivy threw him a mock-horrified look. "Sên King-lo, you have been lunching with Emmeline Hamilton! She'll sue you for breach of promise. What fun for Hongkong! Lady Montsurat's face will be a picture."

Sên laughed. Then he drew the carnation from his

coat and leaned towards her and tucked it in Ruby's frock.

Then she knew that it was some one she had cared for, cared for very much. And she cared for so few people—for so very few women.

"Lo," she whispered, "it isn't—it isn't——"

"Yes, it *is*. Dr. Ray is in Hongkong, and Miss Julia is with her!"

CHAPTER XXXVIII

IVY SÊN laid her hand on her husband's knee. She was speechless.

"It's true," he assured her, "though I scarcely believe it myself yet. Dr. Ray in Hongkong or in any other interesting place seems explicable and natural enough, but Miss Julia Townsend is stark impossibility. But here she is."

"You have seen her?"

Sên King-lo smiled affectionately and a little grimly, "No. She would not see me. But she is here."

"But, Lo, she couldn't possibly afford it! All that way—Washington to San Francisco—hotels—the boat! She couldn't ever do it. You have no idea how poor she was really! She dressed like an old-fashioned queen, and she had literally dozens and dozens of old chests—big ones made of cedar wood—crammed with the costliest things, a hundred years old, some of them, and yards and yards of lace older than that; but I never knew her to buy anything new to wear except gloves and boots and slippers. I don't think she bought even stockings. She had dozens and dozens of pairs of silk ones—the loveliest silk ones—some thin like cobwebs and some

thick as flannel; but she never wore anything else, winter or summer. And besides all those she used to knit others, and so did Dinah and Lucinda—she'd taught them herself. She used to make her own handkerchiefs, hemstitch them and monogram them and all. She almost lived off the place. But she never sold a thing—not so much as one thin old silver spoon, not a tomato, or one of those funny turkey-wings Lysander used for a crumb-brush. She *can't* have sold Rosehill or anything in it. She'd as soon have sold her mother's grave, or her portrait of Robert E. Lee, the Confederate flag that had been in battle with Stonewall Jackson, or Jefferson Davis' autograph letters to her father. And she never, never has let Dr. Ray pay *for* her. She wouldn't do that! She *couldn't:* not a five-cent street-car fare. How has she found the money? Oh—and she always did so long to travel—above all to see China. She has told me so time after time. And she had never been out of Virginia farther than Washington, in all her life, and never expected to be! Lo," his wife cried with a broken giggle that sounded full of tears, "she must have sold Lysander and Dinah!"

"Have you ever heard her speak," Sên asked, "of a second or third cousin of hers, Theodore Lee?"

"No." Ivy had not.

"Neither have I. But Dr. Ray, who is several years older than Miss Townsend, you know, though she looks much the younger of the two—another case of work keeping us fresher than rust does—Dr. Ray remembers him perfectly. He, too, was quite a few years older than Miss Townsend. He served under General Lee in the Civil War—the youngest officer in the Confederate Army, Dr. Ray says. He lost an arm at Ball's Bluff and a foot in the Battle of the Wilderness. The war

left him penniless, as it did so many, and his father and older brothers were killed."

"It was a holocaust," Ruby murmured sadly.

"The most terrible holocaust in history until the World War," King-lo added.

"But slavery *had* to be stamped out, Lo!"

"It usually dies a natural death," the husband insisted, "as it has in your own British Empire, and a far pleasanter death for all concerned, the slaves included. We have seen a pleasant and beneficent side of slavery in China, as I believe the South did——"

"Miss Townsend has poisoned your mind!" his wife told him.

"Not at all," he denied. "Facts are facts—that's all. And the war between the North and the South had nothing to do with slavery. That was an after-thought, dragged in for political purposes, necessary, perhaps, and certainly good strong propaganda."

"Sên King-lo! I don't believe it!"

Sên laughed. "You didn't specialize in American history during your earnest scholastic career, did you? However, as your own uncrowned laureate has said several times, that's another story."

"Yes—do get on about Miss Julia."

"Lee—young Theodore Lee—worked his way to South America somehow. He had but little luck there, but he saved enough to come home on a visit after some years, and he spent a month at Rosehill when Miss Julia was about sixteen."

"Who told you all that?" Ruby interrupted him again.

"Dr. Ray—today at lunch. He went back to Brazil and had failure after failure there—just managed to live for year after year. But he stuck to it, one thing

after another. He doesn't seem to have had much of a business head, but he must have had plenty of grit. And his luck turned at last, nothing much, but it must have seemed a fortune to him. He struck oil about a year ago—alfalfa and rose-wood and ipecacuanha, I think."

"What a mixture!"

"A good many fortunes are mixed," Sên observed. "He turned his little pile into money and sailed from Buenos Ayres almost at once—presumably, as the sequel shows, to repeat his visit to Rosehill. But he died on the voyage. He was buried at sea. That is the story. He left Miss Julia all he had: nearly twenty thousand dollars, Dr. Ray says. She has bought new clothes now, Ivy!"

"Black crêpe ones?" the girl said softly.

Sên King-lo nodded. "And the rest," he added, "or most of it, she's spending in seeing the world."

Ruby Sên's eyes filled with tears. "And the rest?"

"A check to the Louise Home, flowers for Confederate graves. She didn't do it impulsively, Dr. Ray tells me. They talked it over thirty or forty times. Then one night suddenly, as they sat on the porch, Miss Julia exclaimed: 'I'm going to do it. It's what I've longed to do as long as I can remember, and I'm going to now. I'll put one thousand dollars in bank, to make things a trifle easier after I'm back, and to pay for my funeral. My funeral has troubled me rather—especially if I should happen to die soon after one of the garden-parties: I'm sometimes a little short of ready money then. My shroud is all ready, and the lot in the cemetery was paid for long ago, of course; but there are always extra expenses, and a Townsend must be decently buried, and buried with Townsend money.' "

"I don't see Miss Julia on the rates," Mrs. Sên said shakenly.

"No!" Sên King-lo said proudly. "'I'll put one thousand dollars away, and I'll spend every cent of the rest and see China and Spain and the Bridge of Sighs and Westminster Abbey at last,' and here she is in the best rooms of the best hotel!"

"I can't think of Washington without Miss Julia across the river at Rosehill," Ruby said musingly.

"Nor I," Sên King-lo agreed. "It's like a harp with its sweetest string gone."

"And how those poor darkies will miss her! And what a time they'll have! Dinah and Uncle Lysander must feel like orphans."

"Lysander and Dinah are here with Miss Julia," Sên chuckled.

Mrs. Sên gave a little gasping laugh. "Great Scott!" she cried.

CHAPTER XXXIX

DR. RAY came soon after breakfast the next morning, and she stayed all day.

"Here is your bridesmaid," she told Ivy gaily, as she took Mrs. Sên in her arms, then put her away a little to search the younger face with shrewd, beautiful eyes that hid the anxiety they felt. "I'm having the time of my life. Nothing but slang will express it. Between Julia Calhoun and this marvel of a place and the hotel bills, I'm quite off my head. How are you, my child? But you needn't tell me; I only asked for manners. I can see how you are!"

Ivy laughed happily. "How is Miss Julia?" she asked gently.

"More so than ever," Dr. Ray replied. "How I ever am to get her home again, I don't know. I thought I'd never get her away from Honolulu. I must not say that she went surf-riding, for she didn't; but I know she wanted to."

"Scandal!" Sên King-lo rebuked their guest with a quiet laugh.

"Not a bit of it," Dr. Ray protested. "The scandal is coming. But she watched the surf-riding and loved it. She bought a Hawaiian phrase-book and climbed up Diamond Head road to the peak on a pony. She wore a *lei!* She went to a moonlight picnic at Weiniea, and she saw a hula dance."

Sên King-lo's face broke into ripples of fun, as only a Chinese face can, and then the room moaned with his laughter.

"But," Ivy expostulated, "Dr. Ray! How could you let her do it!"

"Let her! Have you never seen Julia Townsend with the bit between her teeth? I have. Let her, indeed! I assure you, this is *her* trip, and she runs no risk of my forgetting it. She asserts herself."

"She always did," Sên said, with a tender smile on his handsome mouth.

"Yes," his wife agreed, "in her quiet, beautiful way."

"Oh, Julia is quiet still. But there is a sort of wonderful, hushed splendor about her. I believe she has grown an inch since we left Washington."

"In width?" Mrs. Sên asked smoothly. And they both knew that she meant not "width" but "breadth."

The physician shook her head. "But I wish you could see the way she carries her head, the history of all the Townsends in her face, a child's unspoilt joy in her eyes, and the Star-Spangled Banner waving over her."

"The Star-Spangled Banner?" Sên reminded.

"It was her fathers' flag for nearly a hundred years, Mr. Sên. At home she is a Southern woman first and last. 'Dixie' is her anthem, Lincoln and Grant anathema. But here she is just an American woman, proud of every state in the Union."

"Then she *has* broadened—very much," Mrs. Sên exclaimed.

"No," Sên objected. "I fancy it's merely a matter of breeding; 'company manners' abroad."

"Precisely," Dr. Ray agreed, "a sort of traveling cloak that she considers it good taste to wear. But, by the way, Ivy, I did not 'let' Miss Julia attend the hula dance. I was not there and did not even know anything of her going until several days later. I was away in Molokai. This is a pleasure jaunt for Julia, but I came for a different purpose. There are several diseases that I have wished for years to see at short range in their native lairs. And when I found that Miss Townsend really was making this trip—the wisest thing she ever had done, I thought at the time, and now I know that it was—I almost instantly decided to link my travel up with Julia's, and that's how I come to be here now. Oh! Is that Ruben?" She left the chair that Sên had placed for her where the shaded breeze came in from the garden and took up the photograph in the lacquered frame and studied it minutely, with wise, kind eyes that again told very little of the thoughts behind them. "Very, very charming!" was her comment as she replaced it.

"He doesn't favor my side of the house, does he?" Sên King-lo demanded with a laugh. "Our son is very English."

"Very, and very handsome!" Dr. Ray answered cordially. But to herself the physician added: "And more

interesting than handsome. He is your *first-born*: a throw-back, of course, to some blonde ancestor of your wife's. Baby number two may be as Chinese as baby number one is Saxon. What then?"

"What did Miss Julia think of the *hula* dance?" Sên King-lo asked slyly, as they sat at lunch.

"That," Elenore Ray replied, "I have not been told. She has never referred to it; but I gathered from Dinah that her mistress spent the next day in bed, with the blinds down. Uncle Lysander was certain sure powerful scandalized. He claims to have blushed all over and to have been nuffin but a jelly."

"What do Lysander and Dinah think of China?" Sên persisted.

"Lysander is as frightened as if he were alone in a churchyard at midnight," Dr. Ray told them cheerfully, "and Dinah giggles more than ever. I have to give her 'drops' every night to calm her—and I make them bitter. Dinah does not add to the dignity of our party. Now it is my turn to ask questions." And she turned the talk into more impersonal channels.

As she and Ivy sat alone for an hour in the garden after lunch, they spoke only of Washington. The visitor felt no impulse to question young Mrs. Sên. Her trained eyes had seen with their first glance in the drawing-room that all was well with Sên King-lo's English wife. There was not a cloud the size of a baby's palm in Ivy Sên's horizon—or, if there were, Ivy had neither seen nor sensed it. Their friend too had seen, clearly enough, that the affection and confidence between husband and wife had endured and grown. But she had caught a look once or twice in Sên's Chinese eyes that she had not liked. And when Ivy in her turn left Dr. Ray and King-lo alone for half an hour—not in neglect of a guest

but because the English letters had come and because she knew how well they two would entertain and satisfy each other—the physician turned to Sên presently and asked him, as the quality of their mutual friendship and respect licensed her to, "Tell me, my friend, how has it worked?"

"Can't you see?" Sên King-lo questioned for question.

"I see that your wife is perfectly happy. I see that you are beautifully satisfied in each other and that, if you and she could shut the world out and keep it shut out, all would be very well indeed with you both. But that is just what none of us can do—and perhaps have no right to attempt to do. Most of our troubles come to us from outside, I think. I believe that the vital germs of every one of them—always—are in ourselves, either in some quality of ours or in some conduct, but that it usually is the friction of cross-currents that develops them. Something troubles, you, Mr. Sên. May I know? Can I help? It is the friend that asks, but it just might be possible for the doctor to help—to see the way out."

"May I smoke?" King-lo asked her, and lit his cigarette slowly. Through its slender smoke he sat and watched the bungalow garden, its bamboos and tulips and fern-trees, and Hongkong down below the twisting roadway, with its blur and huddle of Chinese homes and shops and markets, and the gaunter, though prouder, assertion of Europe's overlordship, and the turquoise sea beyond it.

"It has worked perfectly," he said after a time. "We have had no regret—neither of us. Ruby, I think, has not had an anxiety. I, when Ruben was coming, had my bad half-hours. A Chinese baby would have been a complication, even in London, the kindest, least censorious place on earth and the most sincerely cosmopolitan. You see a greater and a more obvious mingling—or, at

least, mixture of races in many other places; Constantinople, Venice, San Francisco, and twenty others. But it is only in London—only in London of all the world—that there is genuine welcome for the strangers within the gates. But in London itself there would have been no place for a Chinese child *of ours*. And also, I wondered how the sight of a Chinese baby in her arms—at her breast—would affect Ruby. I have the type of Chinese face—that we Chinese have now and then—that does not bear country stamped on it too strongly. I might pass as any one of several races, two or three of them not Oriental or only remotely so, but it's not a family trait. Every other Sên I ever saw and every other Pei-fu—my mother was a Pei-fu before her marriage—has been unmistakably, strikingly Chinese in appearance. And Ruby was used to me. She scarcely remembered, except in a hazy, detached way, that I was not English. But Nature plays many tricks, but will brook none played on her. The Mongolian is a persistent type; and such mixed marriages as ours, through some inscrutable law of Nature, seem almost sure to perpetuate, and even to emphasize, one racial type and to ignore the other."

"Yes," the physician murmured.

"I knew that our child might be born more Chinese than the Chinese—and I wondered if I might not see my wife shrink, even a little, from the child our love had given us. I was hideously anxious for her. And I dared not say one word, give one hint, to prepare her; help her, as that perhaps might have done, to resist an almost inevitable revulsion—to destroy it before it existed. But Nature spared us!"

"This time," the physician thought to herself.

"When I saw how lily-fair our babe was——"

"So you quite forgave him for looking so little like your own people? I wondered, if you had, if you *could,* when I saw his picture just now."

"I worshiped him for what he had spared his mother," Sên King-lo said simply.

"He certainly looks a changeling, even for a child of Ivy's," Elenore Ray said musingly. "Atavism is intensely interesting—and very baffling." She added, "What is it that is troubling you, nagging you, then! —if I may know?"

"You have used the one right word, Dr. Ray, 'nagging.' When the messages—there were two—came that called me to China, I tried to come alone; but my wife would not let me."

"No, of course," the woman said regretfully. "Must you be here long—in China?"

So she knew, had divined, what his trouble was, understood half of his dual trouble—for Sên King-lo was carrying two, and they were quite distinct—knew without any need of being told! But because she had asked him, and because it was a relief to speak to one he so trusted and liked, of what he could not have spoken to any one else, unless perhaps to Charles Snow, Sên King-lo went on.

"As short a time as I can make it," he replied. "She wanted to bring our boy with us, of course; but there I would not yield, and our physician backed me up."

"Wonderful people, doctors!" the physician remarked, "and beautifully helpful."

Sên smiled his agreement. "But I ought not to have brought her," he added gravely. "It was a terrible risk, an unpardonable mistake, and I do not see how I am to save her from finding it out. No one avoided us in London. No one resented our marriage, or dared to

misunderstand it. She was too fine, too unmistakable—and a little because I was so seemingly cosmopolitan, and because London is London—at once indifferent and wholesome. But here it is not so."

"Has Mrs. Sên been ostracized here?"

"Something like that. The Europeans have been supercilious—salacious-minded and evil-tongued amongst themselves and behind our backs, I have little doubt. And my own people have been hard, unbending. The English sneer, more or less openly, and the Chinese have tabooed my wife. An Englishman, a married man who also has a Chinese ménage and children in it, called here one day when I was out, and Ruby gave him tea; but I happen to know that he has forbidden his wife, an Englishwoman, to call on mine."

"But you are going soon," Dr. Ray said more cheerfully than she felt. "Get her away. That is the only thing to do. And you are going soon now, Ruby said."

"Farther into China. To my own family. That will be worse, I fear."

"Oh! I hope not. She wouldn't stay with me, I suppose, while you went and came back for her? We could take a little trip—to Japan perhaps—she and I. I will part ways with Julia Townsend, for a time, or bring her to reason."

"I'd give a great deal if she would," Sên replied. "But she will not. It isn't even worth trying. Don't think me ungrateful."

"I know that you are not that," Dr. Ray said emphatically.

Mrs. Sên came to them from the drawing-room then, her home letters read, Emma's cried over a little—for it had told her of Ruben's first tooth and of a pair of tiny

new red shoes he preferred to suck rather than wear—and nothing more of analysis or of confession passed.

It was late when Dr. Ray went back to her hotel down in the city, and Sên walked beside her with his hand on the edge of her chair.

Even in high daylight (day is never garish in Hongkong) the apish incongruities and misfitments of Young China ways and clothes cannot rob Hongkong of its unequaled beauty. The bamboos' luxuriant, sword-shaped, fern-like beauty still edges with gray-green lace the twisting footpath between Victoria City and the blue-topped Peak. Red Chinese roofs still up-turn here and there among the persimmons and oleanders. Junks and sampans still huddle in the harbor, and the water still croons blue and green and limpid about them. At night Young China seems almost a myth, an unloveliness almost forgotten and quite negligible; the moon and the stars keep their old state up in an imperial sky; lights still shimmer like fireflies and flash like friendly arrows of flame from bush and vine-entangled homesteads and from long pendant lanterns swinging in coolie hands, and down in the great craft-huddled harbor, lights twinkle and proclaim in every color that man-made light can show; queer, passionate Chinese music still throbs now and then through the darkness, and English pianos tinkle long after London's bedtime; Chinese voices rise and fall in velvet guttural across the night-time stillness, and the laugh of a young English voice pierces it over there behind the thicket of moon-drenched roses; a nightingale sings in an old cherry-tree; and night moths wing their filmy flight from the passion-flowers.

As they turned one of the steep, narrow pathway's sudden curves, they almost collided with a singing quintet of young Chinese—two girls and three men, swinging

along all arm in arm and quite spanning the narrow yellow path. They were singing an English music-hall song stridently, the men dressed in European clothes that *were* European—Bayswater or Battersea—the two young women in "English" raiment that was *not* English. One girl swayed a little as she walked, because her golden lilies, disfigured now in sensible English boots, had not "unbound" successfully. They drew aside to let Dr. Ray's chair pass, backing against the bamboos at the road's edge, still linking arms, still singing, but much more softly, just keeping it up: "My mother-in-law ain't no jellyfish." And they looked, as they were, perfectly respectable and self-respecting.

When the descending chair had passed on, they swung back athwart the path and went on again in step and singing again in louder tones: "My mother-in-law ain't no lamb, and she ain't no Venus neither"—crashing it out to the Chinese night, where the moon above showered the yellow path and the gray-green bamboos with a rain of opals, and the nightingale broke off its fragrant song in the old cherry-tree.

Elenore Ray smiled, kindly, a little sadly, as she saw Sên King-lo's hand clench on the frame of her chair.

"You are disappointed," she told him gently.

"In Young China?" he replied frankly. "In some of its surface tricks—candidly yes. Yes, Dr. Ray, I carry two anxieties now."

"So I thought."

"But," he added stoutly, "every new movement has its scum, and scum always rises to the top."

"Always," she agreed. "But fulfilled dreams are sorry things often. I sometimes have wondered what George Washington would think of the Chicago Board of Trade when it's busy, and of the stock-yards."

"But the cause for which he lived and fought and worked was supremely right," Sên reminded her.

"We Americans like to think so," the woman told him; "but right gets terribly twisted in human hands again and again. And the longer I live, the deeper I probe, the more convinced I grow that 'causes' count for strangely little, individual lives for almost everything—everything that really matters."

"And you believe," Sên King-lo questioned slowly—thinking as he spoke of a Chinese Emperor of whom Dr. Ray never had heard—"that in his record of personal character, Washington left his nation a greater heritage than he did in the victory of the War of Independence and in all the great national foundation he and Hamilton built after Yorktown?"

"Just that," was the quiet reply. "In mental equipment and achievement, I incline to believe that Alexander Hamilton was the greatest genius in history, and certainly the greatest of our country. But George Washington was the greater man—because he was the more entirely *good.*"

"Do you hold," Sên asked with a slight smile, "that all who are good are great?"

"I do—the *greatest.*"

The five harmless revelers were near them again, for the hillside road had swung round on itself, and the singers were not far away and directly overhead; and the Leicester Square doggerel belched stridently down: "My mother-in-law she's got a walk like a crab and a tongue like a toad."

"This is not China!" Sên King-lo said, in sudden unleashed passion.

"Tell me something—" the woman laid a motherly hand on his hand that lay on her chair, and her eyes

that were very kind also were twinkling. "Do you hate and despise the Manchus as much as you did?"

"No," the Chinese man said quickly, "I do not. I am older. And I see what I see." He smiled back at her as he spoke, but his eyes and his voice were sad.

The chair coolies came to a quiet halt, as they often do at some point of special beauty.

Elenore Ray gazed about her with a sigh of great content.

"I wish you could have seen Hongkong as it was but a few years ago," Sên King-lo said, as they moved on again.

"This is supremely beautiful," Dr. Ray insisted. "But," she added musingly, "I begin to suspect that the missionary and the gunboat have a great deal to answer for."

"The Chinese who have taken a wrong turning—if they have—will have a great deal more to answer for," Sên King-lo said bitterly.

CHAPTER XL

RUBY had not noticed that her husband had avoided going out with her in Hongkong and was avoiding it more and more; but it was so. He was imperatively busy now, crowding into days the work of business drive and finesse that might well have over-crowded weeks, if not months, for a less capable man. He could not well take his wife to *hong* and to counting-house, to long bank conferences that more often than not ran with a strong political under-current—the very life-blood of young China, if not of China itself—or to more secret and smaller conclaves which took place

behind well-barred doors, when only two or three Chinese gathered to speak together in slow, hushed tones and anxious quiet words. But this was not the reason why Mr. and Mrs. Sên so rarely were seen together in Hongkong. The reason lay close and well-guarded in Sên King-lo's breast: a tiny coiled serpent that lifted its narrow hooded head now and then, meeting Sên's eyes with sly, cold, wicked eyes, and sometimes at night hissing softly in his ear. There were functions to which he might have taken her, long rambles which invited and beckoned, water-side strolls, leisurely peak-side climbs. And there was Happy Valley, the incessantly recurring Derby Day of all the Anglo-Chinese world and his wife, and there was Church Parade, as smart a function, if more narrowed, as London's own, and far more picturesque. But Sên avoided and evaded them all whenever he could. Every hour that he could spend with Ruby at the bungalow he did, and he filled them all so full of intimate charm and gay comradeship that they fed her all the happiness and content that even she—greedy of both—could crave or assimilate. And sometimes she chid herself sharply that she could be so happy so far from Ruben. But Sên King-lo had no doubt of her motherliness for he saw the look in her eyes as they turned to the harbor on "home mail" day.

Sên King-lo was doing his utmost, and his English wife did not suspect—not yet, at least—the cancerous price that a Chinese soul already was paying for a bunch of red peppers an English girl had tucked in a jade-green dress once in Virginia.

A few days after Dr. Ray had visited them Mrs. Sên insisted that her husband should go with her to a shop in Victoria City at which she had been tempted the day before by some ivories and a Satsuma gift-jar

she did not feel competent to buy without Lo's endorsement of their value. She knew she admired them and *wanted* them. Lo would know whether they were admirable or not, and worth half the stiff prices the Chinese curio merchant asked for them. She insisted that King-lo should go with her and decide. He had no way of escape, unless he took the drastic one of telling her frankly why he wished not to go shopping with her in Victoria City. The risk of some discourteous glance or half-smothered word that she might or might not catch or interpret seemed to him less than the risk of making to her the intolerable explanation. So he yielded and went.

At the door of the curio-shop, a famous shop which rich globe-trotters had made a veritable Mecca of the extravagant, Mr. and Mrs. Sên drew a little back to let a woman, or rather a group of three, all parcel-laden, pass out.

Miss Julia Townsend came first, her arms very full —she never carried a parcel less worthy a place in her hands than a prayerbook, a lace-edged handkerchief or a vinaigrette, in Virginia. But the curio-hunter's fever was on her now, and she came from No Wink's shop hugging as many bulky and shapeless paper-wrapped burdens as she could clasp in both arms and hands, her long crêpe gown trailing behind her as never a skirt of hers had dragged in the dust the plebeian populace trod, before. Dinah and Lysander came just behind her, each carrying a pack-horse load of bundles and boxes and brown-paper knobs. Lysander looked mulish, and his ebon was a sable pallid. Dinah grimaced as she waddled, throwing friendly, fat, kittenish glances to all and sundry as she came. Miss Julia moved, as she always did, at a queenly pace, with a queenly mien; but

her old face glowed with the art-lover's victory-look. She thought she had found treasure of great price in the curio shop of No Wink.

The doorway was narrow. Sên King-lo drew back and uncovered, as he would to any woman for whom he made way. His wife waited at his elbow noncommittal, neither offering recognition nor advance, nor hinting retreat. Miss Julia neither hurried nor slowed. She looked at Mrs. Sên with unacquainted eyes, then turned them on Sên King-lo and went leisurely on, with a slight inclination of her proud old head, an inclination paid to the small courtesy their drawing aside had been but in no way an inclination to either of them.

Her servants followed after her. Uncle Lysander gave Sên King-lo a vicious glare that would have been insolence had it been less absurd. But Dinah gave them both a caressing giggle, and a wide look of friendship and fealty out of her surprised faithful eyes.

Ivy passed on into the shop, with a proud little laugh that was not cattish. And Sên King-lo stood and watched his old friend until she was out of sight, his hat in his hand, love and respect and regret in his beautiful Chinese eyes.

Then he turned and joined his wife and addressed himself to the wares and the price-list of old No Wink.

The curio-seller was courteous. He knew of Sên King-lo's wealth, but his courtesy was frigid and unbending. And Sên King-lo, who had laughed in his generous soul at black Uncle Lysander, could have throttled No Wink.

Much as he had loved her, tenderly as he always had shown it, Sên King-lo showed his wife an added affection, a warmer tenderness, a deeper deference that night. But

Sên King-lo's eyes were sad even when they laughed at her. And To Sung began to believe that his master was crazy.

They never saw Miss Julia again, rarely spoke of her again to each other, and she never again to any one mentioned either of them.

The next day Sên King-lo went again, and alone, to No's curio-shop.

At lunch her husband gave Ruby Sên a string of pearls. She already had more pearls than she often wore; but she cried out in wonder at the burnished pigeon-breast tints gleaming softly on these and examined curiously the odd clasp of beaten and twisted lead that fastened them.

That same afternoon Miss Townsend received from No Wink, the curio-dealer, a cube-shaped, red crêpe-lined box of camphor-wood and an obsequious note. He begged his distinguished and generous patron's acceptance of the unworthy and nearly valueless curio he ventured to offer her and explained that it was an old and honored Chinese custom to make some humility gift of appreciation to noble and liberal customers.

Miss Julia Calhoun Townsend did not relish accepting a gift, no matter how small, from a shop-keeper and said so to Dr. Ray, but she liked even less to resent as an over-familiarity what so evidently was an act of respect, and a Townsend always held old customs sacrosanct. So she kept the "trifle," and before she left Hongkong, made a point of going again to the curio-shop and spending there a sum which she made no doubt was many times the value of the crinkled cup in the camphor-wood box.

But Elenore Ray, who had given some study to ceramics, though she had no idea that this bit of Sat-

suma was one of the rarest pieces, the gem of No's collection, and had been, hundreds of years ago, the rouge cup of an Imperial bride, knew that the brownish Satsuma handleless cup was good and very old; and she had no doubt who had paid for it and sent it as a loving-cup, brimming with golden drops of "kindness yet." But, only seeing that it was carefully packed and well guarded, she said nothing of what she "guessed"—a Southern woman's fineness of soul perhaps, perhaps a physician's deep-rooted habit of silence.

CHAPTER XLI

RUBY, the wife of Sên King-lo, journeyed like a queen when her husband took her from Hongkong to the home of his fathers.

They went a short way unromantically enough on the new railroad. Then they made their long slower progress across China in palanquins and by junks.

The second night they camped in a wayside inn's nondescript garden. Sên would not take his wife into the comfortless, unspeakable native hostelry. He had no wish to go there himself.

After they'd eaten, they sat a long time beside the great sweet cone fire their coolies had lighted outside Ruby's tent; for as night neared, a cool tang came in the evening air.

A young crescent moon cut with its sickle the silver and cinnabar sky, and a thousand stars pricked it with emerald and sapphire and the red of Mars' and of Saturn's ring. The atmosphere indescribably clear, the fireweed still showed a crimson glow at the edge of the gorge its lush growth fenced and hid, and the

perfumed smell of wild white roses and the heavier scent of forests of honeysuckles was everywhere; but the violets looked now swathes of white on the grass about them, and the death of the sunlight had stolen their green from the bamboos thicketed behind the squalid inn, leaving the graceful, soft swaying but silent bamboos a mistier, ghostlier gray, and their jointed stems a duller bisque.

Voices chanted on the distant pathway, for it was springtime, the unmatched spring of China, and there as in Chaucer's England when spring comes with its up-moving sap and its tender crinkling leaves "then longen folk to gon on pilgrimages." A band of crickets chirruped to the moon, bathing their horned flanks in the dew on the ferns. And Sên King-lo knew that the hour had come to say what he dreaded to say: the first positive, personal dread that ever had thwarted his comfort and ease in her presence, with her hand in his, a fold of her dress on his knee—for they sat on the fern-bushed grass.

He would say it now, but still he waited a little for his words.

A temple bell in the distance answered its mallet.

Sên King-lo had been eager to quit Hongkong, more eager than glad; for fear had clutched cold on his heart as they had turned from the island, off into China.

But even as they newly journeyed his soul had quickened and throbbed to his country. All that Europe had wrapped about him as an intimate garment fell from him as ash falls from a cigar. He was Chinese again, only Chinese, wholly Chinese, and *at home.* Westminster, Oxford, New York and Virginia were farther from him and more alien than Mars and Orion. Men he had known and liked, broken bread and thought

with, in London and Washington were as gone from him, as nothing, as children's names that the inexorable pulse of the great tide has washed and ironed from the seashore sands. The West was scarcely a dream, less than a wraith or a sun-sucked mist that's forgotten in the yellow throb of an August day. Of all the West, only one thing stayed with him now: the woman he loved and their child—that, too, was exquisitely, sacredly she—part of her body as of his, part of his soul as of hers—the physical and spiritual fruit of the spiritual and physical love of man and woman who were one—the tangible signature of life's greatest impulse.

He thought of Ruby, leaning beside him here, contented and confident, as of some white human rose he had gathered and grafted into his being and keeping here in the dear homeland that was hers as much as his, hers, because his, and, because his, even more hers than his own: his by inalienable birthright, hers by a greater title-deed; more sacramented hers—doubly, trebly hers, because it had given her Chinese wifehood and Chinese motherhood, the supreme, imperial motherhood to which all other earthly motherhoods are small and weak. And he thought of his child as of a bud that the sun of a Chinese love had warmed into Chinese life.

Every tiniest flower that grew by the wayside—commonest flowers of Kent and Virginia many of them —every bird that swung and fluted on a tree that shaded their path, welcomed him home; and his soul denied, his senses disavowed, that close-kindred flowers, birds so feathered and throated, grew in any alien mileage of Earth.

The waterfalls that surged and flung, the tiny brooks that tinkled over the pebbles and romped with the baby trout that played in their happy iridescent bosoms,

were *real,* real water, real beauty, real message, only because they were Chinese—Chinese cascade, Chinese brook, Chinese water. There were *no* others. All places beyond China were one dun, lifeless No Man's Land between Earth and Heaven, between Time and Eternity, as bleak, fruitless, unbellied as a far gray stretch of flat polar ice, as barren and lifeless and hopeless as the Turanian desert at night. There was *nothing* but China, lovely, laughing, forever imperial, his Mother! And Sên Ruby was the white rose of China, twined in his heart, soul of his soul, pulse of his day, dream and crown of his night, who had perfumed his manhood and borne him a son.

Sên King-lo forgot Europe, the playing-fields of Eton, the rush of hoofs at Goodwood, the books he had read at Bloomsbury and at the Bodleian, geranium-hung house-boats on the Thames, Big Ben's luminous signal of time, the clasp of Englishmen's hands. He only remembered the woman beside him because his manhood and loyalty could not swerve even a hair's-breadth from what she had been to him, given him, trusted, consummated.

But he moved beside her now, a Chinese man with his Chinese mate. Once or twice he had spoken to her in Chinese, and only the English lilt of her good-natured laughing at him had reminded him—jerked him back, even with the music of its ripple, to the valley of actuality with a bi-national quicksand under the tomato-red of the succulent, toothsome love-apples.

Sên King-lo never thought in English now, and when he spoke to his wife as they journeyed on and on into China, and still on and on, he had to translate the word symbols of his thoughts before he spoke them.

Translation is a thief. Always!

If the Chinese who never have left the land of their

birth, the centuried home of their race, love China as no other country is loved, the Chinese who have left her, lost her a little in exile, as exiles must, and have found her again, washing their homesick eyes in her beauty and joy, laving their souls in her soul, must love China even more. Comparison is the acid test. China stands it.

And *so* Sên King-lo loved China now.

He did not love his woman less. But he loved his country the more.

And now there was something he must say—the time had come—something the kindness of which he did not question, could not question, but the seeming-kindness of which he doubted. How would it seem to her? Even —how would she take it—she, he remembered it now with a sudden sickness, who even in honeymoon's *sans souci* and complacent time had desired and bought visiting cards engraved "Mrs. K. L. Senn?"

He had meant to suggest it before they left Hongkong —but occasions had slipped, or been crowded out. And, too, in Hongkong, he had assumed that she took, as he did, its advisability and convenience for granted. But he realized now that Ruby had not. And in Hongkong he himself had not realized it as the necessity he saw it now.

She had been scrupulously tended and served as they journeyed, but small danger signals had pricked his quick and subtle intelligence, as broken twigs and twisted vines or scattered grain, a feather caught on a thorn, a bead dropped by a cactus, are messages of warning to a Sioux. He had seen a look that was scarcely a look—more a veneered masking crust than a look—on coolie faces and the faces of pilgrims they'd met and passed —nothing much—and yet—he kept his pistol well loaded

and lay at night across the curtain-door of her tent, and his thoughts busied his mind as the silk-wrapped shuttle busies the rapid loom.

In London she'd said to him: "Make me a Chinese woman!" She had meant it. Would she say it now? Could she mean it now? He thought not.

She had liked Hongkong—in spite of its social coldness—as a child likes a ribbon-tied box of sweetmeats, and had nibbled at it much as the child nibbles and likes its chocolates and nougats. But she had not warmed to the realer China as they had passed through it. She had exclaimed at its picture and beauty, laughed at its "quaintness," but he sensed that it had not touched her, and that not once had she prostrated herself before it. This soul-pilgrimage of his was a picnic to her: gaily colored, well-provisioned, inimitably stage-managed—a delightful kaleidoscopic interlude.

Few tricks of custom, manner or words had crept in to her use during her Washington years, and no traits of personality or thought. But the American vocabulary is too apposite, it catches too neatly and firmly, not to have irresistible appeal to all word-quick ears, and no English girl—princess or housemaid—could listen as often and as long as Ivy Gilbert had to voluble Lucille Smiths and Mary Withrows without adopting a syllable or so of a fresh young vernacular so limpid and forceful that it needs no dictionary and grows a classic.

A hillside homestead, a small husbandman's that clung like a rosy fungus on the mountainous steepness, morning-glories and long columbine ropes matting the overtopping lemon-trees that flanked and perfumed it, had lumped King-lo's throat and quivered his lips as they came into sight of it; Ruby had clapped her hands at it when she saw it, and called it "cute."

A bird on a cypress-tree twittered some sudden domestic anxiety to her absent mate, and Sên King-lo turned to his wife and said in a slow, quiet voice: "Ruby, I am sure that it would make our going through these untraveled places easier and more simple if we wore what Chinese gentlefolk wear—clothes not unlike all those that the Chinese who meet us ever have seen. And it would be a kindness to the old, untraveled grandmother who is waiting for us in Ho-nan. Would you mind? Would you mind too much, dearest?"

His wife turned clear laughing eyes to his anxious eyes.

"I'd love it," she told him.

Sên King-lo drew a long breath. And his heart blessed her.

"But how can we manage?" his wife reminded. "I haven't spied a shop since we left the railway."

"No," Sên laughed, "and you'll spy none again until we return to the railroad, unless a heap of mangos and plantains here and there, with a more than half-naked boy squatted beside them keeping the dragon-flies and the white ants off, with a few coins in a wooden bowl beside him for change, will pass muster for 'shop.' And if it would, there'd be no chiffons or picture-hats or peek-a-boo blouses for sale there. But I had thought of that. And I have brought you all you'd need."

"Did Mrs. Yen select my Chinese frocks?" Ruby teased him.

"She did not! Your husband selected and bought them. Will you wear them, if you don't dislike the feel and look of them when you've put them on?"

"Of course I will," Mrs. Sên cried gaily. "And I *promise* to like them, my venerable lord!"

Sên took her face in his hands and brushed her cheek with his lips.

Very rarely had he done that. But he had divined long ago that his English wife, little as she liked or even could tolerate kissing, would lack and miss something of love's legitimate sweetness, if he never paid her the token that every loved wife in the West received.

Once in a great while Sên King-lo kissed his wife lightly—her face or her palm—and when he did Ruby Sên always laughed softly.

Their lips had never met. And Ruby knew that he never had kissed Ruben. She did not often do it herself—and then only a bath-fresh dimpled hip, or the "sugar-spot" on the back of the baby neck.

CHAPTER XLII

AT daylight Sên Ruby came out from her tent, clad for the first time as Sên ladies had been since the older garbs of China (Japan, imitative in all things, wears them now) had been discarded.

She was laughing as she came, delighted with her new masquerade; it made her feel she had dressed for a big charity function of dance and fun at Albert Hall—highly pleased with herself and her fine new quaint clothes. Lo had chosen them well. He had chosen every "prettiest" garment she had had since her marriage. Her hair had been the most bothersome. She'd puffed it out and screwed it up; but it wouldn't stay stiff, and its slight but established curliness would not "keep put": it didn't look right, and it felt horribly wobbly. Never mind, she'd try again after they'd breakfasted, and Lo should get her flowers and dangling buds to

stick in it at rakish celestial angles! What fun! She wondered if Lo had brought his camera along. She hoped so!

A Chinese man came to meet her, a gentleman far more bravely clad than their servitors—more expensively clad, she thought, than she'd seen any man before; for Sên's Chinese friends in Hongkong she had seen in Western dress only. How curious his clothes were! She didn't like them. Chinese women's clothes were picturesque and comfortable—the best of all clothes for fancy "dress up." But these Chinese masculine garments that she saw now almost for the first time, she did not like; she thought them fantastic, absurd, unmanly—only fit for a comic opera. Who was he, she wondered, and how did he come to be here in this wild countryside—no dwelling for miles, but the tumbled-down inn with fat pigs and thin hens strolling in and out of it—this richly dressed man in a fur-edged under-coat of turquoise cashmere, a top coat of violet silk, and a skirt of gentian-blue-embroidered bright green? A man in petticoats! But she gave the stranger a courteous glance—Lo could not be far away. Then she smothered a giggle. Did the bedizened and skirted stranger think she was Chinese, she wondered.

And then she saw.

Repulsion disfigured her face, and she shrank back as she involuntarily screamed.

It *was* King-lo!

And she was his wife—the wife of a man in a petti-coat!

She had screamed softly—scarcely a scream, but it had cut Sên King-lo as a sharp, poison-steeped sword.

His wife made her amends at once, laughed at her own silliness, pretended it had only been that he'd

startled her. He'd said—she remembered it now—"if *we* wore;" but she hadn't thought of it, hadn't thought of anything but her own fine new things—they were lovely, perfectly sweet.

But they both knew that it was not surprise, but horror and revulsion, that had wrung that half-scream cry from her whitening lips.

They made the best of it—passed it by—both too well bred, too brave, and too kind to do less.

But it stayed.

And shyness—that slowly grew almost to strangeness—crept between Sên King-lo and his wife.

CHAPTER XLIII

IN the miserable days that followed that day, Sên King-lo's loyalty never swerved, but his love reeled. He still loved his wife—love does not die in an hour; only slow torture and persistent mal-usage can kill love—but his contentment in her was maimed. But his loyalty held, for he clung to it fast, and loyalty won.

He wooed her again, with no show of passion, but taxing every resource of his splendid nature and subtle mind to draw her back to her old confidence and contentment. His contentment was bruised and marred, but his soul resolved that her contentment and ease should return. There were men in England and America who ranked Sên King-lo high, as high in ability and skill as in character—and they all were big men and wise, and skilled in their weighing and gaging of manhood. But never before had he been so nearly great as he was now, or so fine in method and difficult achievement. He demanded nothing, pressed nothing,

labored nothing; but he heaped her comforts about her, anticipated her needs and created them. And presently his charm reached her again (even through the Chinese motley it wore) and steeped her again in warmth and satisfaction. He wooed her again for himself and succeeded in his suit. He wooed her, too, for China and failed, failed in the pictured loveliness all about them, as he knew he perhaps was destined to fail again in the teeming home of many people and old customs to which he was taking her now.

She spoke of the beauty about them, its delicacy and majesty; tiny flowers in the brookside moss, rivers of white light, torrents of shadow on great crags and mountain forests — but she never *saw* it. And Sên King-lo knew; but he tended her gently and waited.

At night, when dusk and darkness curtained, he came to her tent, or threw himself down by her side on the ferns gaily, wearing once more his light English tweeds and carrying an English book in his hand, an English jest on his lips, or gossip of cricket and golf. He longed to read Yuan Mei (China's garden genius of happiness, of thought, and of singing) to her here where the world was steeped in all that had moved Yuan Mei to song: longed to give her (because she was his, and he hers) what Yuan Mei, Tu Fu, and Ou-Yang Hsin had given him, what China gave him; but he bottled his longing up and read "Daniel Deronda," or, instead, a novel from Mudie's, a *Morning Post* leader, or verses from *Punch*.

His heart ached, but his nerve never failed or his vigilance slacked. And all the time China was calling him, claiming him, possessing him wholly, as a child in the womb of his mother.

The child leapt.

But the man stood to his ploughshare, held to his bond.
And the fear in a woman's eyes died.

The coolies sniffed at the verdure about them, as they shouldered the chairs and boxes and trudged gaily on; for Chinese spring was turning to Chinese summer.

They came on the edge of his home suddenly at noontide, a day of riotous color and warmth. The half-mile from the outer gate to the wide-flung, tulip-tinted dwelling looked but an easy breadth in the clear, ambient radiance: a long, leisurely house, that looked a series of houses, sprawled among persimmon trees and violet walks, the under-lip of each up-curled roof elaborately carved, a house so much lower than the trees beyond it that it looked, here from the hillside above it, like a clumped growth of red and pinkish mushrooms crowding close together in a nest of white and yellow lilies and ferns—for some of the roofs had been newly painted and varnished or glazed, and blazed red in the sunshine, and some were faded and blinked palely pink. A forest of oak-trees stretched in the distance. A *pai-fang* with markings of gold and silver on its crimson lacquer stood spruce, graceful, and speckless in a garden of tulips scarcely a stone's throw from a small shabby temple. Peasants—scantily clad, and clad too alike to show of what sex at a distance—squelched in a great paddy field and chattered, so it seemed—Ivy could not hear them so far—under their great sun hats as they bent to their wet, oozing work. An old woman was carrying on her back a bundle of faggots, larger than she, into a kiln-shaped outhouse; an urchin who wore very little but ropes of marigolds—one on his head, one on his hips, three round his neck—was perched impudently on a great, patient buffalo, driving it round and round a dripping water-wheel and thrashing it sternly with a

long, harmless branch of young, pliant willow. Peacocks promenaded the terrace. Ducks quacked thirstily in a clovered meadow. A beautiful mare nuzzled the colt that was nursing her and washed its back with a fondling tongue. A cow called to her calf. A spinning-wheel hummed in a near mat-hut. Two graybeards were playing backgammon under a mulberry-tree. Children were at play on a far hillslope, for kites rose from it like a school of excited (if not scandalously tipsy) butterflies. Dozens of tiny dogs scampered and yapped on a mignonette field, and others slept in the sun. A cat was chained to a sundial. And roses clotted everywhere; more roses and more kinds of roses than ever grew in Virginia.

All the homestead place bristled and sang with human life; anvils rang, chisels scratched, saws rasped, grain ran like noisy sand in the man-made chutes and conduits; frail, busy smoke curled slowly up from dozens of twisted chimneys; an employed, thriving, bustling world, the home-hold of the Sêns. Beyond its low, stonewalled boundaries all was wild and silent—a great active hive of human affluence, set in an untouched wilderness of Nature's holding.

Sên King-lo caught his breath, and his eyes filled with tears.

Ruby Sên's eyes did not kindle. She smiled a little—and involuntarily a word came in her alien thought: "Caravanserai."

A servant came running, others ran at his heels. The high doorlike gate was unchained, unbarred, and opened, and the guard-devils—or perhaps they were gods—painted on it drew apart and aside, as if making obsequious way for the Sên who had come home.

And Sên King-lo with his hand on his wife's litter

walked slowly on to the house in which another Sên Ruby had borne him and died.

Sên King-lo's soul flamed; but he leaned down to his wife as they went—between prostrate retainers now—and spoke to her with as light unconcern as he might have done at the Eastbourne or Windermere end of a long day's journey.

CHAPTER XLIV

MRS. SÊN knew before they left Hongkong (for Sên King-lo had told her, explaining it all as well as he could) that she would find odd customs, some, at least, of them unwelcome and irksome, to which she'd have to conform at the home of Sên Ya Tin. In Hongkong she had accepted and assented cheerfully, gaily even—thinking them all part of the fun and, too, sincerely holding them part of the nothing-price to pay for the pleasure of going with him and for the great adventure of making a long Chinese journey in a Chinese way, of seeing his childhood home and sharing it with him, and feeling radiantly and deeply sure that any personal discomfort, embarrassment even, of hers would be a joyful contribution to make to his happiness. But she found it hard to feel so now, even at first; and as the days passed and the newness a little lost color, and the dullness and out-of-placeness deepened, she found people in fantastic clothes with grotesque manners and it impossible.

They gave her great greeting—these funny Chinese ways, who thronged the old homestead—and they gave her ceremonial and elaborate attendance and entertain-

ment that also was heartily kind. But it all both bothered and bored her, and it repelled her.

She had expected immediate and affectionate grandmotherly greeting from a touched and grateful old lady to a young mother and wife who had come so far to visit her—and had left her baby across the world and its seas to be able to do so. She did not see Sên Ya Tin for more than two days. And when she did old Ya Tin did not come to greet her but sent for her grandson's wife to come to her presence, inclined a head to her proudly, scanned her with calm, slow eyes and very sharp ones, gave her three small sweetmeats, and dismissed her with a thimbleful of pale, boiling tea—and then apparently forgot her for days.

She had planned to go everywhere hand-in-hand with Lo, he showing her where he'd flown his first kite, spun his first top, stolen his first bird's eggs; giving his childhood to her as he found it again for himself. It seemed to her that she scarcely saw King-lo.

That was not true; but he and she were together far less than they ever had been, even when he was busiest, since their marriage. His grandmother commanded and engrossed him; his kinsmen—there were thirty-six of them here at the homestead—surrounded him, and tore him away. And when he came to her, even his consummate adroitness was not enough to hide from her that his truer being was off with his kindred—in the *k'o-tang* with his grandmother or out in the far open with the men of his blood. Sên Ya Tin was *everything* here—all others but her satellites and chattels. Ivy never had felt so "small" before. Even the nursery governess at Washington had had more freedom and been of far more consequence. Chinese etiquette and customs hedged her about, and she felt that they

throttled and insulted her; most of all they bored her very much.

On her arrival she had been taken at once to the harem quarters and, unavoidably, Sên King-lo had not. Even in her smothered rebellion she could not fail to see and think that the harem rooms and courtyards were very beautiful, but a eunuch stood or lay at each entrance! And her British gorge rose at her close proximity to Sên C'hian Fan's three wives, who pressed about her all at once, felt her face with their hands, as if to see what it was made of, giggled and screamed at her feet, pulled down her hair with pitying squeals, and summoned a tire-woman (who was a concubine also and made no secret of it) to put it up "right."

She was not imprisoned, but she felt so. She passed in and out of the "flowery" quarters as she would, and no eunuch ever gestured or glanced to stay her. For Sên King-lo had made his request, and Sên Ya Tin had given her orders. She roamed the great domain as she chose, but when she returned the concubines whispered together apart and looked at her in a way that told plainly that they regarded her as abandoned, lacking in self-respect —if not worse. And in England she had a vote!—Or had, unless alien marriage had lost her it—while here——

Even the babies saw her as "strange," and only the most complacent of the plump little crawlers and toddlers would suffer her hands or her friendship. But those of them that would were her safety valve and alleviation. Even so, they hurt her; for they made her sharply homesick and panged her with an added knife-like ache for Ruben. It had not been easy for Mrs. Sên to leave her baby in England. She had done it because she *could* not let Sên leave her; but it had hurt almost intolerably,

and the sight and sound of the Sên babies here—they were Ruben's kindred, and twelve of them were babies in arms—rubbed her sore mother-hurt raw.

They gave her a chamber of her own and a courtyard of her very own, too, but even the fear of Sên Ya Tin could not keep the other women out. They were all over her—chattering, laughing, tweaking queer little instruments, scolding servants who scolded back, handling her most intimate belongings, handling her. The "flowery" was a beehive of women, and sometimes Ivy's indignation called it a monkey-house of them.

They were the kindliest, merriest things on earth. They were curious, of course, childishly curious, to gaze on the human curio she was to them—not one of them ever had seen a European before—but their close pressing and constant attentions, that she so abhorred, were at least nine-tenths sheer womanly kindness. Even the concubines were sorry for her—so far from her own home and so uncouth and untaught—she hadn't even a painted face, poor thing—and they all were heartily anxious to sister her and make her at home. And they went to work at it with one united will. They gave her their baubles; they tried to teach her blind-man's buff—and failed as Blanche and Dick had failed before them; they tried to lend her their prettiest clothes, their pipes, and their face paints. They implored her, in words she could not understand, and in gesture and clutches she could, to gamble with them; and Mrs. Sên, who had bought her platinum and diamond wrist-watch with bridge winnings, was disgusted. And they never left her alone.

The prettiest woman there—and even Ruby saw how pretty she was—was the youngest concubine, and her baby was the prettiest baby of all the fat, dimpled lot.

The girl had a tender heart and an unspoiled soul. Her eyes filled with tears sometimes when she saw Sên King-lo's foreign wife sit silent and listless apart. One night La-yuên cried on her mat because she was so sorry for Sên Ruby, and the next day she brought her tiny baby and laid him in Ruby's lap. And the baby, after one startled look, laughed and held up his wee hand and clutched at Ruby's beads. And Ruby caught him closer and held him to her face—snuggling and loving him in spite of his sad, smirched birth; forgetting, not sensing, that the sins of the East are not the sins of the West.

They were all sorry for her, and sorriest because it was whispered that the lord King-lo, even in the terrible land where they lived, had not even one concubine; and they all were very kind to her.

Nowhere else are social barriers at once so high and so negligible as they are in China. A Chinese lady chums with her maid—between the whiles she cuffs and beats her—eats with her, consults with her, gossips with her. And this disconcerted and revolted English Ivy even more, if the truth must out, than the ever present and patent concubinage did.

Sên King-lo came to his wife as often as he could. At Sên Ya Tin's decree, startling but not to be questioned, rules of social sex decorum were scandalously relaxed. Sên King-lo had access to his wife at all times, of course, and because—that she never need lack friendly faces and voices about her—she was quartered so unisolated from her new kinswomen, in going and coming to her King-lo came more in touch with the haremed ladies of his kinsmen than was Chinesely decent, and far more than old Madame Sên would have cared to have it whispered abroad. And he saw several

Chinese girls now—unmarried daughters of the house, but he thought little about any of them, and neither the wives nor the maidens seemed to resent it—unless giggling is a protest. Ruby still wore her Chinese dress invariably, but he came now and then in his English clothes. The first time he did there was a harem riot, for one of the women had spied him, or a eunuch or a slave girl had seen him and told; and the little painted ladies tore pell-mell into Ivy's room, pushing and jostling each other in their mad rush to see and to touch, and women who never had left their own precincts or seen a forbidden man, much less let one see them, nearly ripped Sên King-lo's coat off his back.

And one tripped and fell—fell thump across King-lo's knees, and Sên King-lo chuckled and chortled with glee, and so did the tumbled one's husband who came in then to see what all the noise—excessive even in a Chinese "flowery"—was about. He'd no business there of course, in Sên Ruby's apartment; but she went freely among his kinsmen, so that did not so much matter; but that he was here with his kinsmen's unveiled Chinese women was an enormity. But no one seemed to mind in the least, and the fun ran fast and shrill. Sên Po-Fang caught his wife up by her girdle and shook her, and she slapped his face, and they both giggled—and so did every one else except Mrs. Sên King-lo.

They devised many a rout and festive function for foreign Sên Ruby—games, temple picnics, fireworks, peacock-races, kite contests, juggling, wrestling, a play enacted by performers sent for from many miles away—and when the monthly festival came they kept it with even unwonted observance and noise—for Sên Ruby. All that China was they tried to give her, all that China had to show they showed her—because she was a stranger

come within their god-guarded gates, and because the lord King-lo had held the cup of hot marriage wine to her maiden lips and drunk it with her.

But Ruby thought it all absurd, uncivilized; found it tame and paltry.

Miss Julia would have revelled in it, would have found and greeted the soul in it all and threaded out its meaning, learned its histories, loved its pictures. In a slighter way, Ruby would have done so too, had she come upon it merely in privileged travel, had she not been the English wife of a Chinese man—the English mother of a half-Chinese child.

But Ruby Sên hated it all.

She liked the food; *no one* could help liking the best food on earth. But she found meal-times abominable, except when Sên King-lo came, which he did whenever he could, to take his rice with her. When he did not she ate alone as often as she could; but even then the women crowded in—there was neither a door nor a key in all the place—to watch her eat, greatly excited at her plying of forks and knives, for Sên King-lo had brought those from Hongkong.

Ruby hated it all, and most of all she disliked Sên Ya Tin.

But Sên Ya Tin liked Sên Ruby.

CHAPTER XLV

WHEN King-lo left his wife at the fragrant apartment's outer entrance, he had gone to the outer gate again and waited there until Sên Ya Tin should summon him.

She sent for him soon.

She sat immovable on the great carved and inlaid chair on the red-covered daïs at the far end of the great *k'o-tang,* as Sên King-lo came through the opened panel and k'o-towed thrice to the floor. A slave in the outer room closed the panel again, and they two were alone in the great carved room.

Sên Ya Tin was not old as Western women count years now. But she looked very old, for life and her own flaming spirit had scorched and burnt her. Her face was as brown and crinkled as an autumn leaf that the lightest touch will flay into dust. Her black eyes—time had not dimmed *them*—glittered diamond-cold and hard, under her snow-white eyebrows which tweezers had shaped and torn into almost the sharp shape of the accent that crowned the proud name of Sên—narrow, almost thread-like eyebrows that were so silken that they glistened on the brown parchment of her wrinkled forehead like sun sparkled snow streaking a rough brown rock. Her hair was as white and as glistening as they, fantastically dressed, and bristling with costly stick-pins. Her tiny brown hands — more claw-like than human with no look of age's exquisite softness about them—were arrogantly wide-spread on her robe, every finger and one thumb covered from joint to knuckle with blazing gems, seven of the eight fingers tipped with heavy jeweled nail-protectors more than finger long.

It was a very tiny figure that sat bold upright in the huge chair. Her blunted scraps of feet just peeped arrogantly beneath the fur hem of her turquoise-tinted trousers, just resting on a cushioned teak-wood stool that was higher than most such footstools, or else the tiny woman's tiny feet could not have reached it. Stripped of her heavy robes Ruby Sên might have lifted and carried her. But her embroidered robe of yellow bro-

cade must have weighed as much as she. It was not the sacred imperial yellow, of course; but it *was* yellow, which it had no business to be. There is no sacred color in China now, alas, and perhaps not too much else that is sacred in the old imperial way. Alas, and alas! But that was not why Sên Ya Tin sat with jeweled yards of satin brocade about her. The lady Sên took little notice and no "stock" of Young China. She held with old ways, waited serenely for them to return, and kept them here as she always had. This was a learned woman. She could both read and write. The blind scribe that squatted by his low bamboo table in the fragrant courtyards and wrote for the wives of her sons, when those letterless ladies wished to write to the homes that had been theirs before marriage or purchase, never did personal service for Sên Ya Tin. She knew, too, her country's history. She knew that, though individual insanity had been unknown until European intrusion had bred it there, China had suffered civic and national insanity before, and more than once—before the birth, nine centuries ago, of Wang Ah-shih, the poet father of Chinese socialism, and after that erratic Prime-Minister of the easy-going Emperor Shen Tsung had gone on high. But always the convulsion had been short. Socialism and peasant-franchise had strutted but a day. Then China had shaken the distemper off and returned to her state. Sên Ya Tin looked for China to do it again. The new Republic troubled Madame Sên as little as it concerned her, but she always had hugged a personal vein of wickedness of her personal own. And because she had no right to wear even a tinge of yellow, she often did, and often had since widowhood had made her supreme in the house of the Sêns. No one outside her gates would know, for

no one within her gates would presume or dare to report.

A vase of almost inestimable value, a porcelain saucer of melon seeds, with a tiny-bowled, long-stemmed silver pipe, a tinder and a gold-lacquer box of fine tobacco and a tiny queenly fan lying near it, stood on a small, octagonal, carved teak-wood table beside her; a small, tight bouquet of mint and sage and musk lay on her lap; a tiny tame monkey, tethered by a silver chain, perched on the top of the tall, throne-like chair; and about her neck Sên Ya Tin wore, as she always did, the long mandarin chain of cornelian beads of her dead husband's—as the widow of a British officer often wears his regimental badge.

She sat with her face square to the panel that had slid open for King-lo and slid close again behind him, and her unmoved face was a wrinkled, lifeless mask.

Three times Sên King-lo k'o-towed to the floor, then stood with downcast eyes and hands meek within his wide sleeves and waited for her to command.

She let him wait, neither pleasure nor love nor welcome in her adamant eyes.

The water-clock dripped a long minute away.

Sên King-lo did not lift his eyes. Sên Ya Tin did not move hers. She watched him stiffly through unwavering narrow lids — and so did the mouse-sized monkey, too.

"Approach!" she said in a cold, relentless voice.

Sên King-lo neared her by three slow steps; his padded Chinese shoes made no sound as he moved; his hands were still hid in his sleeves; his eyes were still on the floor. And then he k'o-towed again, and again three times, then stood and waited as before.

Again she let him wait—but not so long.

"Nearer!"

Three steps more he went, three more obeisances he made, and as he stood again erect he lifted his eyes to the face of his father's mother. And Sên Ya Tin sent her eyes to his, steady old eyes, harder than age, that looked but told nothing, gave no hint or sign.

It was nearly twenty years since his eyes and hers had met; for she had been ill with smallpox when he had been in China last, and she had forbidden him—as her will and self-control had forbidden the smallpox to disfigure her. And boy and pox had obeyed.

She looked at him long, coldly. And he waited for her to signal or speak; to beckon or dismiss.

His eyes were the eyes of her father. A silver nail-protector studded with diamonds clattered a little against a pearl-studded one of gold. His mouth was the mouth of her favorite and first-born son. The cornelian beads moved a little on her bosom.

Slowly, very slowly Sên Ya Tin rose from her seat, came from the daïs, spurning the high footstool from her way, tottered across the glass-like mahogany floor on her tiny, tuber-like, satin-shod feet. Still Sên King-lo did not move. Her face broke up a little. His eyes leapt to her then. A cry that was only a whisper of sound breathed from her lips that scarcely moved. Sên King-lo took a step—another—two more, and she hid her working face on his coat. Her grandson's arms were about her. They held her close, his head bent low to hers. Her hands fondled his sleeves. She was quivering now. He heard her heart beat under all its harness of silk and satin, embroidery and jewels, and she heard his. She was sobbing now.

Yam-Sin, the monkey, pounced on the porcelain saucer and gorged himself on melon seeds that snapped briskly

between his strong, tiny teeth, his silver chain clank-clanking against the high chair's inlaid wood; the tiny pipe of an august lady clattered to the floor; and the fine, silken tobacco streamed after it, raining down from an upset lacquer box.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE Chinese doyenne and autocrat of the Sêns and the young English wife of the house met two days later.

If the meeting was not awkward, it was badly circumscribed. Ya Tin knew not a word of the other's tongue, and Sên Ruby scarcely a score of Ya Tin's.

Their meeting was only decently ceremonial, and Madame Sên had made no elaborate and hampering toilet today. She was a sensible old creature and did the little she could to give the younger and so foreign woman a friendly and unembarrassing welcome. Since she had consented to receive Sên Ruby at all and in doing so acknowledge and condone a marriage she strongly deplored—and she had consented in reply to a letter King-lo had sent her from London, her answer reaching them in Hongkong—she, having consented, intended to show Sên Ruby all not too inappropriate kindnesses. But the language barrier was insurmountable. Sên King-lo acted as interpreter, but conversation so spoken cools in the process and grows increasingly difficult. And Sên Ya Tin was by nature and habit unbending and had no knack of assuming an easy congeniality that she never had felt. She had few affections; the few that she had were veritable passions. But between them and icy indifference and vitriolic hate Sên Ya Tin was

amost devoid of creature feeling. She was critical and self-indulgent to a degree. She was brutally, and sometimes coarsely, frank. But she had high principles, and she never relaxed in her personal adherence to them—no matter what the cost to her own inclination and convenience. It was largely from this grandmother that Sên King-lo had inherited the uprightness of character and relentless habit of self-analysis that underlay and dominated all his suavity and sunny good nature. He had inherited also from her no little of his manliness, but he had inherited from Ya Tin few of his tastes. Indeed, she had few, and, unlike most women of her years and power, she had no foibles. Her sometimes wearing yellow was not a foible, it was an assertion. China until recently was an empire of innumerable kingdoms—and queendoms—and in her own Sên Ya Tin would brook little control, and still less dictation.

For a Chinese woman she was very untalkative. Nothing escaped her narrow, bead-like eyes; little came free to her tongue. But she always spoke the truth—almost un-Chinese in this, and, too, it must be owned, a little unfeminine. She was capable of almost incredible indifference, but also, though far more rarely, of exquisite sympathy. She was almost devoid of a sense of humor —almost denying her Chinese blood in that. Few had heard her laugh, and no one, but three men who were dead, ever had seen her smile. She cared for few amusements—unless her pipe was one—and she was not industrious. She was intellectual, but read few books—cared little to whet her mind on the minds of others. Argument vexed her. Conference and conversation bored her. The music that King-lo so loved was nothing to her, and the poetry that fed him as the river feeds the verdure and cereals on its banks never nour-

ished and rarely pleased her. She took flowers for granted, but she liked and understood fine stuffs. Ivories interested her, and lacquers enchanted. She liked all animals, and they liked her. She regarded children as belongings and possibilities. She was ruthless to servants. She ate but little and paid little heed to what she ate, or when. She was without religion, except for her personal creed and observance of uprightness and her belief in China and her loyalty to it. Her nepotism was broad but easy-going, more her one milk of human kindness than a cult. She loved the stars and gloried in them and was no mean astronomer. She had few superstitions and no cheap ones. She was not prejudiced. She had a fine and very mathematical mind, though she cared more for color than for form. She had little imagination but great intuition. She was neither a man's woman nor a woman's woman. She thought most women dolls or harpies and most men gullible and weak. She liked or disliked, if she did either, at first sight, and she never changed her mind.

During the scant half-hour of their initial visit, Sên Ya Tin repelled Ruby, who thought her ugly, sour, and mediocre. But Sên King-lo saw that Ya Tin liked, and in some odd, strong way approved of, his English wife, and his heart leapt and his courage quickened that she did. He had not expected it, and it seemed to brace and stamp the self-respect of what he had done and the un-Chinese choice he had made.

He wondered why his grandmother did. She could have told him. She, too, had caught a something Chinese in this alien granddaughter-in-law. She liked Ruby's uncringing manner—to which she was unused in the women her sons and her sons' sons had married. And she thought the younger woman rather brave than foolish

to have made both the marriage and the journey she had. There was nothing that Sên Ya Tin admired more than she did courage.

Sên Ya Tin questioned.

Sên King-lo translated.

Mrs. Sên answered.

Sên King-lo translated.

Over and over again—that and only that.

Then the small bowls of green, smoking tea and the scant sweetmeats came and were given and taken without a word.

Then Sên Ya Tin dismissed them.

CHAPTER XLVII

IT rained all the next day, and King-lo sat with his wife and read to her and talked with her of England and of Ruben. And they wrote letters home—letters that would be long in going; for runners must take them to a distant, but the nearest, treaty-port, before they could make any positive postal start.

Towards evening Sên Ya Tin sent for her grandson.

Ruby scarcely expected to see her husband for hours; but almost at once, as she sat crocheting, he came back, eager of pace and of face—and a soberly dressed man followed him to her side and bowed, crossed his hands, and stolidly waited, not looking at Mrs. Sên but carefully eyeing the silk jumper she was making.

Deft-fingered always, Ruby practically had discarded needlework—even its pretty playtime offshoots—since her marriage, no longer in need of her own industry to be always well-dressed. She had liked to sew well enough, partly, no doubt, because she did it so well;

but she had hated the necessity, and she always had taken more pleasure in shopping than in making or mending.

But in Hongkong King-lo had warned her, "You may be dull some days—just at first—at the homestead, while it is all strange. Take along something to do, something you like doing."

Mrs. Sên had laughed it to scorn, the suggestion that she could be dull, even for an hour, alone with him in China, with him in the wonderful place he'd called home as a boy. But he had repeated his words, even appealing to her, and to please him she had laid in a great store of ivory needles and silks. And already she was finding the advice she had laughed at good, for already she had found the life in the women's quarters monotonous and deadly. She could quite understand why the painted and jewel-hung prisoners smoked so incessantly. She herself was smoking more cigarettes in a day here than she ever had smoked in London or Washington in a fortnight. One must do something, drug the discomfort of personal stagnation with some sedative motion, if only of one's hands. One couldn't smoke all the time —at least, she could not, so she had begun an elaborate jumper that she didn't need and could not wear in Ho-nan over a stiffly embroidered Chinese coatee.

She looked up at King-lo with questioning eyes.

"He's one of the tailors," Lo told her. "Sên Ya Tin's best one. She has sent him to you."

"To me! What ever for?"

"To make you a habit."

"A habit—what sort of habit?" Did she need more Chinese clothes, she thought rebelliously. Did they think she was going to stay here forever? Lo had promised

to take her home. Didn't they know that? Ruben was in England! Didn't they care?

"A riding-habit," King-lo told her.

"A Chinese riding-habit! I didn't suppose there were any. Why must I wear it? When must I wear it?"

"No," Sên said gently, "there are no Chinese riding-habits. An English riding-habit."

"He couldn't make one," Mrs. Sên retorted with an unappreciative glance at the motionless tailor.

"He can make most things," Sên laughed.

"Has he ever seen an English habit?" his wife demanded. She was not in the least convinced.

"Surely not," King-lo owned, "nor any other sort of riding-habit, nor even any sort of a picture of one, I dare swear. But he's a genius."

"He doesn't look it," Mrs. Sên remarked crisply.

"Granted," her husband agreed good-naturedly, "but you know the classic adage, 'Things are not always what they seem'—not even Chinese things. 'Skim milk'— you know the poem. This chap can do as he's told."

"But who's to tell him?"

"You and I."

Ruby giggled—she had not often done that of late. "You're crazy, Lo," she asserted. "I couldn't tell him how to make one, and I'm sure you can't."

"Don't be too sure," King-lo advised her. "Ah, here come the stuffs for you to choose."

Several half-grown Chinese boys had padded in as he spoke, each carrying a paper-wrapped roll of material—sober-eyed lads with far shaven foreheads and silk-tasseled queues hanging almost to the hems of their sober robes, the crest-badge of the Sêns on each blue-clad back.

"Master-artist Worth's apprentices," Sên pronounced them.

"Tell them to apprentice off then," his wife commanded. "They look more like dummies than apprentices," she added. "Tell them to go, Lo. I don't want a habit—here—what should I do with it? We couldn't even ride in Hongkong. Send them away."

"Just a minute," Sên King-lo begged. "The grandmother will be disappointed. She has planned it to give you pleasure. Two of the grooms are trying out a horse for you now, a splendid, gentle creature that my cousin Wang's son often rides. The venerable one has commandeered it for you. It has never had a woman on its back, or a side-saddle, but it has a side-saddle now: the saddlers were up all last night, making it by candle-light. Sên Wo P'ing has seen Englishwomen ride in Shanghai on the Bubbling Well road, and he was with them all night—it was the grandmother's command—directing them as they worked by candle and torch and lantern light. And they'll be doing it again tonight. Ka'-ka' is careering about now in the storm with a side-saddle on her back, but it is only a half-finished one. One groom is clutching and dancing at her bit, hanging there for grim life, the other is side-saddled on her back and looks like to break his neck—but he won't do it. They all three are having the time of their lives, as we used to say in Washington. But tomorrow or the next day Ka'-ka' 'll be as tame as any rabbit. The old heart is set on it, and so is mine. Won't you have her kindness, wifeling?"

Ruby Sên rose slowly, the silken jumper falling to the floor.

"She is very, very kind, your grandmother," she said softly, and King-lo saw a mist in her eyes. "I

shall love to ride here with you. Come, help me choose," she bade him as she moved towards the stolid waiting urchins.

Sên King-lo's face glowed. He was grateful to Sên Ya Tin, and he was grateful to Sên Ruby.

And, seeing them engrossed with soft cashmeres and stout tussores, the master tailor dropped on a surreptitious knee, then squatted squarely on the floor with his feet tucked in beneath him, and studied the fallen jumper eagerly.

"What is it, dear?" Sên asked her presently, when he saw a new perplexity a little wrinkling her forehead.

"Won't my riding-skirt drive the mare crazy, Lo? You say she has never carried a lady?"

"Nor has she, but," Sên chuckled, "you forget—Ka'-ka' has carried many skirts—quite as long ones as the one you wear in the Row."

His wife turned a sudden painful crimson. She *had* forgotten for a moment. Was she to ride with her husband riding beside her wearing petticoats?

Lo saw and understood. But he gave no sign and moved quietly to his wife's writing-table, sat down and found a brush and dipped it.

"What are you going to do?" Mrs. Sên asked as she followed him.

"Make your riding-habit," King-lo told her.

"Lo, you are wonderful!" she exclaimed, as the habit grew quickly on the pad, a habit perfect in every detail.

She had found a new talent in her Chinese man, and she leaned and watched him proudly with her hand upon his shoulder.

The tailor slipped up without a sound and came and watched the rapid brush-work too. And when it was

finished, he drew a long tape from his sleeve and nodded without speaking.

"He says, 'Can do,' " Sên told her, with a laugh.

And it was true, whether the man had said it or not. The new habit completed would have disgraced neither Rotten Row nor Bond Street.

Sên Ya Tin stood and watched them as they started for their first ride together in China, an odd, but not unkind, look in her sharp, agate-hard eyes. She smiled a little, grimly—she who had not smiled since this Sên's father had died—smiled when King-lo held his hand under Ruby's boot and mounted her so. And Ya Tin stood and watched them till they were out of sight, lost in the verdure of the far-off hillside; for the day was very clear, and Sên Ya Tin's ageing eyes were very sharp.

When Lo had come to tell her that the horses were ready at the house door, Ruby had started a little and then had flushed; for King-lo's riding clothes were as British as her own.

How would Madame Sên like this, Ruby wondered—if Madame chanced to know.

But, if Sên Ya Tin was surprised, she scorned to show it, and Ruby wondered if she'd already known and consented, for she knew that no innovation intruded into the queendom of Sên Ya Tin that did not come licensed by imperious Ya Tin.

It was the first of many rides, and they were the best and the most wholesome pleasures of Ruby Sên's sojourn in the homestead of the father of her child.

When they galloped side by side through the quivering bamboos on the hillslopes, along the mossy banks of a rushing river, through avenues of vermilion roses, under fragrant, wax-flowered lemon-trees that met and

roofed above them, some of the old springtime ecstasy and comradeship came back to her, and the charm of her man found and wrapped her again.

Her escort was as devoted and as careful of her as he'd been on the Potomac, his eyes as kind, his laugh as ready. But it was his breeding, the breeding of his race, the man's loyalty to the woman who had trusted him and given her life into his keeping, the personal loyalty of his manhood and his being that laughed and chatted with her as they rode; for Sên King-lo was not *with* the English wife who rode beside him, Sên King-lo was back in China, his soul meshed in China's, his heart torn, every nerve an ache, with the thought that again he must go, go from the flowers and skies of China, from her rainbowed loveliness and her barren rocky places and her wild and rushing torrents, from the customs of his people, the tombs of his ancestors, and the dingy, disregarded temples of their gods.

And when he drew his bridle, and slacked their pace, and pointed with his slender amber whip to some special bit or stretch of beauty, and called her attention to it in a quiet voice that almost trembled and that throbbed in his throat, Ruby scarcely *saw*, caught no message; because this was China, and China would forever leave her cold.

It is human blood and story that makes country, not architecture or flora, neither bleating polar cold nor seething equatorial heat.

CHAPTER XLVIII

"THOU wilt cleave to her then, my son?" Ya Tin asked gravely, as they sat alone at midnight conference.

"While I live," Sên King-lo answered.

"Yet it tortures thee to go."

"It tortures me," he said.

"When do you wish to go?" Ya Tin asked calmly.

"Soon," King-lo pleaded. "Dismiss me soon, O Mother, I entreat thee. The lingering is hard."

"And if I will *not* dismiss thee—will not dismiss thee ever, Sên King-lo, or release thee from the obedience and fealty thy ancestors have sworn of thee? But chain thee to my side, and to thy place of heritage where thou belongest, where thy spirit will be, no matter where or how thy bones will go? What then?"

Sên King-lo held her eyes with his, but he made no other answer, neither spoke nor moved.

They sat so while the water-clock dripped slowly in their silence.

At last the Chinese grandam laughed, leaning a little towards him, mocking him with her eyes; a grim, gray crackle of laughing.

"Thou wilt disobey me, if I forbid thee go! And I am Sên Ya Tin, and thou art Sên King-lo!"

Still he neither spoke nor moved. But his soul gave her soul answer, and her stern soul met his and hailed it.

Still a time she let the water-clock drip and the silence keep between them as they sat with nothing else between them but the tiny, low table of her pipes' lacquered tray.

"Enough!" she spoke at last. "Go! And go in

peace, Sên King-lo, first-born of my first-born. I have other sons of our race. But thou shalt go richer than thou camest. Much of thy heritage shall go with thee. Nay!''—as his lips moved to frame a word, his hand gestured towards protest—''it is my will. I will not brook it otherwise; for thou art the son of the dearest thing I ever suckled or quietened in my arms, and it is punishment enough for thee that thou must go, must go from China.''

Sên's face quivered.

''But,'' she added quickly, ''thou art right to go, King-lo, and I would not have it otherwise. I am shamed that thou must lie in the barbarian land, shamed that thou mayst not dwell *here,* as thou shouldst, with thy Chinese wives about thee and thy small-footed concubines and thy scores of slave-girls. My honorable lord had many—more than he could count, or cared to—but I counted them all, and I ruled them well. All the province knew what a Number-one I was, and they heard it and spoke of it in the Vermilion Palace at Pekin. My lord, thy father's father, boy, took no heed: he cared more for the stickpins in my hair than for all the painted roses on his under-women's faces; but I took great heed of all his women and their children and of all that was his. And I burn in flame that no such state as he kept thou shalt keep—in thy celestial native land. But thou art right. I applaud. Did I forbid, thou wouldst disobey,''—again the crackled chuckle—''and it pridens me that thou wouldst. A Sên must pay his score at the inn of life. Thou hast made a marriage-bargain with a foreign woman and made it in her own barbarian way. It was thy weakness and thy sin. But now the tally-hour has come, and thou must pay. The man who cheats a woman, or mocks her

with a payment in coin she does not value, is lower than the vermin that feeds on putrid shellfish, fattens on the slime-bellied scavengers of the ocean. Go—when thou wilt. And I will raise a *pai-fang* for thy pardon of our gods; I will build a great temple on the hill where the peach trees cram the melons on its slope and the cypresses wear the winter snow on its crest; and I will make the old temple, where thou madest thy young play as a child, a riot of blooming flowers, a hymn of running water. The nightingale and the kingfisher shall join in its song, and I will cram the temple hall with jades and yellow roses. That shall be thy penance here in China, as loneliness and longing shall be thy penance in England—the England of thy wife; and perchance the gods will accept my bounty and thy pain, and thou shalt come again to thy people in the garden of on high. We will not often send message or courier to each other, I and thou, for it is ill to scald a sore; but thou shalt think of me, and I shall think of thee, across the oceans and the years. I shall hold my pride in thee for the sacrifice thou makest and the troth thou keepest even to the end; for it proves thee worthy of the milk I gave thy father, O, babe of my babe. Greatness is built on sacrifice, always it is so. I bless thee, and I bless thy sacrifice, Sên King-lo."

He rose, unsteadily, and then k'o-towed before her slowly; once, again, and then again. Then he slipped to her feet and laid his hand upon her girdle and his face against her knees. And Sên Ya Tin laid her palms on his hair and smoothed it softly.

At last she sent him to his rest, for the day was breaking, and as he moved to go, she held his sleeve a moment, and said, "I like thy woman, the girl with thy mother's milk-name. She is a woman of the barbarians, but she

is a sash-wearer, Sên King-lo; I like thy English woman. And she too shall have a taper and a crimson slip of silk-paper prayer in the temple I will build, and another in the hall of the old temple over yonder beyond the oak-trees where thou used to make thy playing in the courtyard. And her name shall not be taboo or coarsely spoken in the harem-courtyards of thy kindred. For she has worn a girdle of thorns under her inner garments here, Sên King-lo, and she has borne it quietly and bravely like the sash-wearer that she is. She has neither scratched nor whimpered. If she bears thee a girl-child, I charge thee then to send me word, for it shall have my stomacher of diamonds and my gold-lacquered tobacco-box with the lizard of rubies on its lid."

Then he left her, and she sat alone while the old water-clock dripped the morning hours away.

And Sên King-lo lay a little on his mat, in the room that he'd used so as a boy—lay down on his mat because Sên Ya Tin had commanded him.

Soon he rose, and when he had bathed and perfumed his hands, he lit a taper before the ancestral tablet in the *ko'tang* and went out through the courtyard and the twisting yellow paths, till he stood alone beneath the cypress-trees on the eastern hill.

CHAPTER XLIX

JUNE flowers grew in the grass, a beryl and cinnabar sky crowned and mantled the world. The trees were heavy and big with leaf, grave and gay with a score of greens. Bees hummed in the wild roses; an old apple-tree, late but lusty of blossom, buffeted and bent by a thousand gales—but its good roots held—lay prone on

the ground, its flowers lay a perfumed white and rose veil heaped on ferns and blue harebells; a baby squirrel sat bolt up on the prostrate gnarled trunk, industriously washing his baby face. The summer air had a score of scents and bore on its fragrant warmth one message. And married birds were teaching their babies to fly.

The flowers that had bloomed in the wood at the Potomac's edge were blooming here. The same butterflies swam above them.

They were wonderful old apple-trees—the prone one here and the prone one there. But when the apples of this one ripened they'd be insipid and tasteless, as almost all Chinese apples are, more ornamental than eatable, but deliciously scented and valued for that; and the fruit of the other tree had ripened at Ivy's wedding-day as crisp of flesh and full of sour-sweet wine as the apples that grow in Albemarle County.

Ruby sat on the ground, as she had been sitting for almost an hour. She crouched there in misery, so motionless and still that the little squirrel had not scampered away when he'd come, and scarcely was eyeing her now as he completed his toilet and preened and plumed his feathered, furry tail. He would have whisked off squirrel-quickest at the farthest sight of a dog; but he had been born fearless of human creatures, as fearless as he was of the patient, friendly buffaloes on whose humped backs he often rode, for Chinese are never cruel to such soft, small, woodland things, and never kill them but at need. Rats, and even puppy dogs, if of valueless breeds, have quick despatch in China often; but wild little things of softer, longer fur and swifter speed are rarely molested and never teased, and so are scarcely wild at all. But this wee squirrelling would have kept his greater distance and washed his face in greater

seclusion had the woman there on the grass been less stock-still.

Her brooding eyes were fixed and hard, staring bitterly at the lovely, laughing landscape before her. It was prison bars to her, all of it, and the site of her shame.

For it had come to that: Ivy Sên was ashamed, not of King-lo, never that! but ashamed of her own displacement and not unashamed now of the birth of her child.

But she was sickening for the sight of Ruben, the song of his inarticulate baby voice, the feel of his fat, naked, pink and white foot in her gloating hand, the precious down of his head against her cheek, the intimacy of his fearless eyes, the baby claim of his imperious little hand on her bosom. It had been stingingly hard to leave him, cruelly so too, because the day of her leaving him had been also the day of his weaning; but the wrench of that parting had been less than the dull ache of her waxing missing of him. She wanted her baby, and every hour she wanted him more.

If King-lo did not take her back to Ruben soon. . . .

Six months ago!

How had she stood it?

How much longer could she stand it?

She had been so proudly glad when she first had known that a babe was soon to lie in her arms, so exultant when it had come!

But now her inmost being shivered and cringed, because she knew that again a new-born child would lie in her arms. But not here! Not here in this horrible China! That should not be. It had come to her in China, this poor little unborn one, but she would not bear it in China: they must go home, she and it.

She had not told Lo. She could not tell him here. He must not know! No one must know or think of it here.

Why had she come? Had her cousin Charles no love of her left that he had not warned her of what life would be to her here?

For all her torture—and it had been just that—at leaving baby Ruben behind her, she had come with radiant gladness—impatiently eager to reach the country of her husband and to make it hers, without losing for an instant her own. Lo had done so much, perfect citizen of the world that he was! Why should his wife be less splendidly adaptable—more crassly insular? She had fretted, almost fumed, for the ship to go faster, reach China sooner, feeling it a laggard, and feeling,

> "—so tedious is this day,
> As is the night before some festival
> To an impatient child that hath new robes,
> And may not wear them."

And yet she could have danced for joy and anticipation every waking hour of the way on the boats that had brought them.

If the impulse of all love is to create, its even greater, more constant, longer, finer impulse is to share. She had loved Sên King-lo well, and she had staked her soul to give him all that was she or hers, to have for her very own all that was he or his. *That* was why she had insisted upon leaving her child and crossing the world with her husband, crossing the world into China. She would give and she would take *all*. And he should set the key and choose and make the frame of their mutual being: marriage meant that, as her soul and the feminine instinct of her womanhood sensed and gaged it—and craved it. His people should be her people, his God her God. It had not been lust for adventure, or wilfulness, or freak. It had been loyalty, womanliness, and wifehood. A splendid, sacred trinity!

And they had failed her; she had failed them.

Whose was the fault?

Not Sên King-lo's. *He* had not failed her. Her English fairness, her heritage of centuries, knew it and said it. Never had man failed woman less, or mate mate. He never had failed her once, not for a breath, not by the width of a hair.

Nor had her heart failed him. She did not love him less than she had. His quality appealed to her not less but more as they passed hand in hand through the long glade of days. Her husband's quality was her highest and firmest pride. He never had grated on her once nor affronted her taste, and she knew how rarely even the happiest wives could say that. His charm, that perfume and weapon of personality that cannot be defined or expressed, held her almost increasingly; it gripped her securely and close. And she knew that, be the years however long, let them bring whatever they might, stretch wherever they might, she should love her man to the end.

She knew how generous he had been to her—how he had warded off from her every ill thing, great or petty, that he could. He had been tender of her every failure, her miserable little shames, her worthless shrinkings and had covered and condoned them—had covered them gently as a hen its chicks under its wing. And what it must have cost him to see her shrink and "turn"! Would a Chinese woman have failed an English husband as she had failed her Chinese husband? She believed not. Was China's then the better part? China that she disliked and was ashamed of! She had made no sacrifice in marrying Sên King-lo, but she knew now that he had made a sacrifice in taking her to wife, and could but have known that he did. For he had known both his

country and hers, his people and hers, had known both well, and she had known only her own. He had known all the spiritual barrier, the fundamental prohibition. He must have realized her disqualifications! And when pay-day had come, how gaily he had paid the price, how ungrudgingly! Paid for both. For she knew that his tally had been tenfold hers. If it had vexed her to be here, to suffer the repugnance of odd and uncongenial ways, what must it not have been to him?—and *she*—his *wife*—knew that the texture and nerves of his soul were as fine and sensitive as those of his strong sensitive hands. (She had seen him balance by its stem a long peacock feather on the tip of his finger until it ceased to seesaw or move at all, and she had seen him lift Reginald Hamilton, bulky and heavily clothed, up off his saddle and swing him lightly down to the ground.) What must it not have been to Sên King-lo to see her scarce-smothered dislike of his home and kindred, of all that meant *all* to him; what must it not have cost him to bring her here, knowing, as he must have known, how poor a thing, unfitted and unpolished, she would seem to Sên Ya Tin, to all his kinsmen, to the women of the domain, to the very coolies?

She had meant so well and so bravely, and she had done so ill and so cowardly!

She had been happy in Hongkong. And Hongkong's scorn and innuendo had reached her. (In that one thing she had been cleverer than he.) And she had not cared. She had been unaffectedly indifferent to it all, because Sên King-lo was "MacGregor," and she sat on his right hand.

But here, where it had mattered most, here where she had garnered up her dream of infinite and exquisite sharing with him, here where he had been at her woman's

mercy, his English wife's mercy, her happiness had sickened, her comradeship and pluck had crumpled.

The little furry thing had finished his toilet, and he scampered away. The woman never moved.

Oh—to see Ruben! Oh—to be in England! Her husband's people were not *her* people, his home was *not* her home!

Ruben's baby voice called her. England called her. The shabbiest, grimiest taxi in the Strand was more to her than all the pagodas and lacquers and peonies in China!

She hated peonies now. She always should. She hated all of *this*. The bamboos that bent over there in the breeze mocked her. She had been pilloried here in Ho-nan. To live and be with thickly painted, chattering women who tittered all the time; who never had the dignity of a sorrow, or the blessing of a care; who had no responsibility—hadn't even the grit or tang of jealousy—but tottered about, because their feet were deformed; who were vain of their hideous deformity; and who gorged on sickly sweetmeats and scandal! She couldn't understand a word they spoke or whispered, but she knew Mayfair and Washington too well and too shrewdly not to know the sound of scandal when she heard it! To eat with a posse of giggling chattering women, young and old, or to eat alone, half her meals, while a dancing bear reared above her shoulder and growled for tit-bits! To see cats chained and tethered like house-dogs and hear them wailing how they liked it! Sên Ya Tin was addicted to cats, and on one moonlight night the screech and yowl of twenty tethered and outraged cats had well-nigh crazed Ruby Sên. Lo had not been there to slake her nervous fury, for he had been in an all-night attendance on Sên Ya Tin in the

ko'-tang or hawking in the moonlight with his kinsmen.

China! Oh—to go! Oh—never to have come! She *would* escape the place. They could not keep her—they should not! But could she ever escape the memory?

Would she love her child—her second baby? She did not love it now. Could she ever love it—would she when she heard its cry—a child begotten in this China! She loved Ruben, second to his father; she loved Ruben, her fair-haired, Saxon-seeming baby son. She was dearly proud of Ruben. A young queen-mother might envy her Ruben. But this unborn child of hers—would she live to hate the flesh and blood that were bud of her own? Might she live to be ashamed of her own baby? What if China marked it!

CHAPTER L

OLD women's ignorant, unscientific tales, silly peasant chatter—English tales, English chatter—ribaldy lurched threateningly to her recollection. Laughed at, turned from in disgust, when she had heard them, they half distracted her now—and she had been near enough distraction without their sudden menace. What if . . .

Trembling violently, she crouched still lower on the ground and hid her face on the old tree's trunk.

King-lo, coming to find her, heard her wild sobbing long before he saw her.

He quickened his pace; but he came very quietly, and when he reached her he knelt down and laid his hand upon her shoulder and left it there without a word.

And as he waited for the rougher paroxysm of her grieving to wear itself a little out, he saw that it was

an old apple-tree that lay upon the ground, an apple-tree struck down by some raging storm of China, in one of those fury times when the Yellow Sorrow lashed and churned its low banks into wide, endless miles of hideous flooded wreckage and of seaweed thick with stark and twisted floating human bodies, and when angry winds mowed peasant homes and huts of mat and reeds as sickles mow the ripened grass; but that, so stricken, the tree still lived and grew and bore, its good roots still holding securely in the earth. His face, already tender for his stricken woman, took an added softness and an added strength. So, he thought, a man knocked to the ground might hold with steadfast fibers to the foundations and nourishment of being, still grow and give.

He knew the old tree well. He had climbed it and rifled it of its tasteless, rosy, scented apples often when a boy.

He saw the veil of white and pink its blossoms scarfed upon the grass. He saw the little wild flowers blowing near it—the June wild flowers of Virginia, and he remembered. He saw love's confession and its shyness come in a girl's dark English eyes. He held her surrender and her dearness in his arms.

He knew that he would remember this old apple-tree, its courage and its beauty, this *one,* selfsame apple-tree, in China and Virginia, with its rosy, hopeful, perfumed signal on the ground, its sturdy triumph of endurance and persistence in prostration, its dual message and its dual memory, the little wild flowers smiling at the ferns beside it; he saw in it a token and a commandment, and he knew that it would live with him while he lived and that living it would link—in his spirit—East and West.

He laid his hand upon his wife's.

Ruby stirred to the touch and let him lift her to his arms.

"It's my head," she told him, choking back her sobs. "It has ached all day"—as indeed it had. "I wish you hadn't found me while I was so foolish."

"I am very glad I did," he answered.

"The pain made me cry," she whispered brokenly. "I won't cry any more."

Sên King-lo had never seen her cry before. But he only said quietly, as he soothed her hair, "Cry it out, dear."

But she was made a little of his own metal, and she laughed through her dwindling sobbing and dried her face upon his sleeve.

He held her close, and she seemed glad to nest so. And they stayed together in the quiet, while a squirrel bounced softly back and looked them up and down.

"It will be better soon now," Ruby said presently. "It is better already."

"We must try to cure it soon, Ivy." He had never called her that before. "Rest a little longer, sweetheart, then let me take you back and bathe it while you try to sleep. I cannot take a sick girl the long trail that is waiting for us, and I had hoped that we might start tomorrow."

"Start—" She dared not say the rest, but he felt the pulse leap in her wrist.

"—for home, dear," he finished for her. "It is time we went."

She made no answer. She could not trust her voice, and she was trying desperately to keep some of the joy from her face.

"Are you not rested a little?" Lo asked her before long. "Shall we go, slowly, now?"

"Quite rested—and very much ashamed," Ruby told him.

Sên lifted her and led her beside him, with his arm about her shoulder.

When they saw the red roofs in the distance, the red up-curling roofs of his birthplace, Ruby drew away from him and faced him.

"Lo," she asked, "are you sure that you are ready? Is there any hurry? Lo—tell me—do you want to go?"

"Want to go!" Sên mocked her, laughing down at her, and his eyes laughed with his lips, "want to go *home*—and to Ruben!"

And his wife believed him.

It was the first lie Sên King-lo had ever told her.

CHAPTER LI

IF they had given her courteous welcome, they gave her kindliest parting. They gave her many words, and she understood the kindness of their tones. And they gave her many gifts. Sên Ya Tin gave her jewels and a jeweled lute, a silver box of sweetmeats, her own face, painted before King-lo had been born, and a cape of peacocks' feathers. The women gave her silks and embroidered crêpes and opal-tinseled gauze. Her husband's kinsmen gave her ivories and jades, and the toddlers gave her flowers and splint-baskets of persimmons and lychees, and one gave her its favorite doll.

Sên Ya Tin gave them pleasant, tranquil speeding—at the outer door this time—and there was no hardness in her eyes.

And Sên King-lo went as he had come, with his hand

on his wife's litter, smiling lips and cheerful, happy eyes.

The red roofs of the homestead were dimming in the distance when a veiled and shrouded woman slipped from among the trees, and held out a tiny yellow hand to stay them.

At a gesture from lord Sên King-lo the bearers waited, and La-yuên came closer, throwing off her dark merino veiling as she did so. She held out to Mrs. Sên a long and slender parcel and another that was cube-shaped and not large, each swathed in rice paper that glistened silky in the daylight and each tied criss-cross and securely by thin, red cord-string.

Ruby took what La-yuên offered; but before she could frame words of thanks, or King-lo improvise them for her, the girl had shaken her clasped hands at Sên Ruby, made the k'o-tow of subservience to the lord Sên King-lo, and darted like a tottering lap-wing back towards the homestead through the shelter of the forest. But they both had seen that as she turned and sped away her eyes had filled with tears.

For the concubine had loved Sên Ruby and was loath to have her go.

"Ought she to have come?" his wife asked anxiously. "Will she get in trouble for having left the courtyard?"

"Undoubtedly," Sên smiled as he said it, "if a eunuch sees her, or her baby cries before she gets back, and they hear and miss her. She'll get a furious wigging—but not much more for this 'first offense.' She'll not be beaten, have her stickpins taken away until the new moon, or get less soy with her evening rice, perhaps, She'll not be lowered to the grade of the handmaidens. Po-Fang is very fond of La-yuên, and so is his Number-one. But I dare say she'll worm back in as snugly as she wormed

out. It's a 'capital offense,' but I dare say she knows her wicked ropes—many of the concubines do—though I have heard the grandmother say that this girl was the most obedient of all the flowery quarter. It will be all right if her baby does not cry."

"No—it is his nap-time now," Ruby said more contentedly. "He is not apt to wake, and if he should, he's got a stick of barley-sugar in his hand."

"Sweet dreams!" Lo laughed. "You needn't fret, dear. It will be all right, then, if the frog has got his suck-stick."

"But if a eunuch does see her going back and your grandmother is told?"

"She will only shrug her shoulders, I think—today—and send the fellow about some other business; but she'll not hear it, I am sure. It would be reported first to Po-Fang or to his Number-one. She has the right to hear it first, and she would only laugh and say she herself had sent the girl on an errand, and Sên Po-Fang would only wink at the eunuch and toss him a coin. Don't you worry," King-lo repeated as he motioned the bearers to move on.

It was very wrong of the lord Sên King-lo to be footing it across China while his woman rode in a padded, cushioned palanquin. But he had come much of the way so, he had entered and left the homestead of his people, on foot, with his hand on his English wife's chair, and he was going as he'd come.

At dusk-fall they halted, and while their servants made their camp King-lo and Ruby feasted on the grass.

"Now," she said, as she gave him her empty coffee cup, and nodded to him for a cigarette, "open the parcels La-yuên gave me. I want to see."

"No." Sên shook his head, as he struck her match.

"You must not look at your last parting gift, given you after you had left the protection of the devil-screen. It will bring you bad luck for eleven moons, if you so much as peep, until your journey is over, until you are safe behind your own devil-screen of your own house door."

"A devil-screen, in Kensington!" she tossed at him scornfully. "We haven't got a devil-screen at our front door."

"Oh—yes, we have."

"What?" Ruby demanded.

"Love," her husband told her.

"Yes," she answered softly, "and we'll trust it, outside as well as in. Cut those strings at once."

When the rice-paper was pulled off it left a striped box of flat, gaily-colored straw, a box of tiny drawers which, when Ruby drew them out, showed each a saucer and a wee soft brush. Sên King-lo chuckled as he leaned over her shoulder. It was a paint-face outfit—white, carmine, rose and black, and a number of soft chamois "sop-rags" and "smooth-off cloths" all complete, that his cousin's concubine had given his wife.

"There's a hint," he chaffed her.

"And here's a poem!" Ruby exclaimed, pouncing on a slip of crimson paper lying unfolded on the little piles of chamois.

La-yuên could neither read nor write—the blind courtyard scribe must have made the characters of her message—but she knew that it was sin to deface, or even crease by folding, a printed, cut, or brushed word.

"Poem! More like a sermon!" Lo laughed as he took it from her.

"Read it to me," Mrs. Sên commanded.

" 'Make thy face a garden of roses and lilies and find

favor in thy honorable lord's eyes,'" Lo translated carefully. "Now you know!"

Ivy took the crimson letter from him with a quiet smile and put it back. "Open the other one," she ordered.

"You are a fearless woman," Sên King-lo asserted as he obeyed. Then he shouted joyfully. La-yuên had sent his English wife a Chinese "back-scratcher," but not such as you can buy any day in State Street in Chicago, or in Museum and Hart Streets in London: "scratchers" quite genuine in their not patrician way and useful enough, if you chance to need them; but sometimes their tiny hands are imitation ivory, and their long black handle-stems made of painted wood.

This tiny palm was of perfect, finest ivory as exquisitely molded and as perfect as Ruby's own hand; each wee knuckle flashed an embedded jewel, very small but very good; and the sharpness of the minute finger-nails was considerately smooth. The long handle was of "green-moonlight" jade: an exquisite, costly toy, despite the raw suggestion of its useful purpose: an implement of self-indulgence fit to rasp discomfort even from the person of a red-button mandarin. And from the "chop" carved in the jade of the long handle, King-lo made little doubt that in other days it had done so; but he kept that surmise to himself

CHAPTER LII

RUBY smiled in her sleep that night, lying in her tent, dreaming pleasantly and kindly of a Chinese concubine who had been loath to say "goodbye."

At dawn King-lo left her still sleeping happily and went quietly out of their tent.

He turned back on their route and retraced his own steps of the day before. On a hillock not far from the tent his wife was in but standing back on their road of travel, nearer, if only a few rods nearer, to the homestead he had left—forever—he stood and looked back towards where the red roofs lay that he could not see—that he would not see again. His face was very calm, but its gaiety had gone. No need to wear a mask now!

This was his last turning back.

He knew that he would not turn back again. This should be his last self-indulgence, his last lingering alone with self. He was going into exile—exile self-made, self-inflicted. He would not falter in his courage, or, while they lived, fail Sên Ruby, the mother of his son. He had sown—and he would reap. He would reap a golden harvest and lay its rich, ripened sheaves at her feet—and she should never know. She could not be of his people; to his utmost he would be of hers. His inner soul, his spiritual core of being, was his own, an ownership no man could renounce. His soul was his and China's for all time; but his heart should beat for the wife he had chosen and taken, and his daily doings should be as her country's.

He dismissed it then—and stood alone with China; a proud flush dyed his cheeks; tears filled his eyes.

Sên King-lo lifted his hands and held them out with a gesture of farewell and of endless fealty and longing towards the dominion of the Sêns, the queendom of Ya Tin.

He gave a greeting, and he took one.

Then he turned—again—towards his tents.

When Mrs. Sên lifted the curtain of her sleeping-tent and came through it, King-lo was directing the servants

who were spreading the breakfast meal. He was humming "Annie Laurie," and he was clad in English clothes.

Why had he done that so soon? she wondered. When she spoke the question later, Sên replied, "Oh, we may as well now. The country here is quiet again. I was needlessly concerned before, I'm sure, and the coolies know us better now and understand."

And that was true. He *had* been needlessly doubtful of his coolies and the servants, whose menace had been one of social dislike and spiritual disapproval, not of physical attack. The coolies and servants were good-natured on all the return journeying. Many of them lived in Hongkong, and several of them had left their wives and children in the narrow, crowded streets of Victoria City.

As soon as their morning meal was over, they pushed on—towards Hongkong and the West. Mrs. Sên would not delay the restart to change then. But when they halted again to dine, and for the night (they had not camped at noon, and lunch had been but a picnic) she laid aside silk trousers and tinseled satin coat—to her surprise a little regretfully. They were pretty, if odd, those costly Chinese garments that Lo had chosen and given her. They would make wonderful finery for Albert Hall charity gatherings or for some ducal function of masquerade, but Sên King-lo's wife could not wear Chinese costume for "fancy dress."

Lo was giving her deft aid over a dinner frock that "did up" in twenty places, most of them beyond her reach, when she put the troubled question to him in their tent.

"That's up to you, dear," he answered with a laugh, as he snapped a final "popper" behind a puff of *ninon*,

for they were dining in some state tonight, al fresco in the wilderness. "They have served their purpose. You might make cushions and tea-cosies and those vanity-bag things you women like to swing out of them, I'd think, and take them home for presents," he added. Then he gave the puff of silvery, smokey *ninon* another careful tweak and bent and kissed a dimpled shoulder.

"You are very good to me," Ruby whispered with her hands upon his coat. "Lo, tell me, does it hurt you very much—to leave China?"

"Very much," he told her, "but it would hurt me more to stay. I have loved being here as only Easterners love such things, I think; but I am ready to go home now, Ruby. I take my treasure with me, and we go back to the treasure we have left. My wife is my happiness and my contentment. I would not give her for a world 'made of one entire and perfect chrysolite'!"

No one called on Mrs. Sên in Hongkong—few knew that they were back. King-lo scarcely left the bungalow, the few days they waited for a boat.

Men came to see him, and he completed with them the business things he had planned and come to do.

The day before they sailed, by the man who took a message and a greeting to Sên Ya Tin, his wife sent a letter and an offering to the venerable lady and a horde of costly Chinese garments to the concubine La-yuên. Perchance something of China's quiet, whispered message had reached Sên Ruby after all!

She kept one of the lovely native costumes, to treasure it for memory. She kept all her stickpins and every Chinese bauble that Sên King-lo had given her, and with them a flower that he had gathered her in the forest, and one that he had fastened at her breast, in their bun-

galow garden, late the night before. It was then that she had told him—shared with him—what was coming in the English winter. And for answer he had put his hands about her face and kissed her slowly on her lips.

They stood together on the deck, as the great ship moved slowly from Hongkong.

Presently his wife made an excuse of something she wanted in the cabin—no, she'd rather find it herself—and left Sên King-lo to take his last look, say his last goodbye to China—alone.

Hongkong grew a blur. Sên King-lo's face was very pale as he took his last look at his country; but his eyes were calm and steadfast, though his heart ached with a pain passing the pain of woman. And he thought that the gods of China made mouths at him.

CHAPTER LIII

THE rural social strongholds in England are far less complacent and easy-going than London is. London is something of a jade and unbends to any fun. The "county" is a prude, respectable to a degree. "County" never bends. London's the more human and undoubtedly has the better time. If "county" has a finer art of living, London has the prettier knack, and the gayer, more amusing.

"Give me the county for my funeral," Emma told Sir Charles, "but let me live in London every time." But Lady Snow was frivolous and meant to stay so.

And even Sir Charles, who saw through most things, could not see why the Sêns had moved to Surrey in October, almost on their return from China. London could be trusted to keep its welcome of Mr. and Mrs. Sên

warm, but he doubted considerably whether the semi-county of Brent-on-Wold would welcome them at all.

Sên King-lo had his reasons, of course, and probably they were good ones; but Sir Charles could not think what they were.

It was Sên's doing, not Ivy's, Snow was sure.

Ruby had been quite willing to make the home-move that her husband had suggested, but not glad. London was her Mecca and always would be; but she was content to live wherever Lo wished, if it might be with him and not in China. She knew that she would not be prisoned in Surrey, or forbidden long drinks of London's wine. King-lo was no wing-clipper, least of all of hers. If he longed for country life, or chose it for some other reason, she was more than willing to have it so. It was his turn to have his way, she felt sincerely. And what did it matter, if they were together, with Ruben, bonnier than ever, toddling at their feet, clutching at her skirts? Sên King-lo had no entire monopoly of loyalty and sunny niceness, or of fineness and bigness.

Sên King-lo had not suggested their moving because of any longing he felt for flowers and trees, open spaces, and running water. All such things were one to him now. London meant a great deal to Sên. And his opportunities for the big Anglo-Chinese work he still meant to do, and to do with his might, opportunities for the personal touch and mutual yeasting of friendly minds and foemen's, which are so much of all international work's success, were in London tenfold what they could be in any other spot in Europe. But he knew that he was very tired, and that unless he rested certain mental and personal forces of his that had suddenly worn thin, his hand might lax hopelessly and fall away from its helm. There was work to do that needed him for its best doing. Ruby

needed him, and would need him more and more as Ruben grew older. For Sên King-lo already knew what no one else suspected, not even Charles Snow, that Ruben's Saxon body was but the sheath of a mind and spirit and inclination intensely Chinese. Sên saw a coming day when it might be for him to stand between Ruby and their boy; to curb Ruben, to comfort Ruby, to spare her all he could, to save Ruben from mistakes that were the heritage of the father's son. And the child that was coming in December—how might it not need him, how might not Ruby need him because of it?

It was because of all this that Sên King-lo had turned from the vivid rush and inexorable pull of London life to the haven-quiet of the place he found and bought in Surrey.

Winter was mild that year in England. The drooping weeping-ash trees were naked of their leaves, fires were comfort as well as "company," of course; but the grass still kept a hint of greenness; the holly was scantily berried; here and there a tiny flower-face peeped up from the rock garden; an heroic, insensitive, old rose-vine was erratic enough to put forth a shivered, puny bud; a japonica-tree at the sunniest stretch of the south wall frankly threatened to flower. There was no demand at all for skates, but there was some for racquets by young and enthusiastic players.

The Snows were staying with Sên and Ruby, and the cook took her orders from Lady Snow, for a time. There was a trained nurse in the house, and the local doctor whom Mrs. Sên had chosen "dropped in" at tea-time fairly often, at Sên King-lo's request.

Today Ruby had not come down to breakfast, Emma had left the cook to her own devices, and Sir Charles

thought that the doctor was upstairs now and had been there a deuce of a time.

Sir Charles Snow was smoking strenuously, not in the big drawing-room, but in the pink-and-white absurdity which the servants called "the downstairs boudoir"—the big drawing-room's near neighbor, almost annex—and that was worse, for the "boudoir's" dainty, expensive fripperies were perfect caches for smoke-smell and smudge. But a man, at least an English man, has a right to do what he likes when a whole house is at sevens and sixes, every woman in it looking important, meals late, fires neglected, and men ignored or snubbed.

"It is too damned still," Snow grumbled irritably to his third cigar.

Suddenly the big man jumped like a nerve-ridden woman—at least his heart did—at a sudden sound.

But it was only a sympathetic tail thumping ingratiatingly at his feet.

"Hello yourself!" Snow replied, glad even of a terrier to speak to. "*You've* no business in here. Wait till my lady wife sees you—only, if you take my advice, Bimbles, you won't, old boy."

Bimbles yapped a pleased reply.

"Oh, all right," Sir Charles retorted; "if you don't care, I don't."

Even a dog's company was better than none.

The door opened, and Emma hurried in—but before his wife had closed the door again, Snow had heard a tiny cry.

"Well?" he demanded anxiously. Emma looked "bad," he thought. And that wasn't her way!

His wife made no reply, except to sob and throw herself, almost vixenishly, in a chair.

"Tell me," he begged her brusquely.

"Oh, Charlie, it is too terrible," Emma wailed angrily. "Ivy?"

Lady Snow shook her head. "All of us. It's a Chinese baby."

Charles Snow looked at her with gloomy eyes.

"The ugliest baby I ever saw. It isn't like a baby. It's like a hideous little Chinese god, and it looks ten thousand years old."

"Then it mustn't," Sir Charles remarked grimly; "only an emperor may look ten thousand years old."

"Well, then," his wife retorted, "it looks twenty thousand. It hasn't any eyes—just up-and-down wrinkled slits. It's all cheek-bones and *yellow*—cheek-bones right up to its awful little eyebrows. It hasn't any nose, and what it has is wider than its mouth, and those horrid up-and-down slits that I suppose are its eyes, if it *has* any eyes, keep waggle-waggling all the time, blink, blink, blink."

Snow sighed, a smothered, dreary sigh. Emma's description sounded Chinese enough.

"Looks like Sên, then?" he said.

"It does nothing of the kind!" Lady Snow stormed. "I tell you it is the most hideous, living thing I ever saw—and more Chinese-looking than any Chinaman I ever saw. It looks like Low Tease, or whatever you call him, when he was nine hundred years old, in those awful illustrated Chinese books of yours, and it looks twice as Chinese as Low Tease does."

"Lao Tze was a mere boy of two or three hundred when he died, dear," Sir Charles murmured gently.

"I don't care!" Lady Snow snapped through her angry weeping. "It looks a disgrace! So there!"

"Are you sure? Sure that Ivy's baby looks so *very* Chinese?"

"Sure? Of course I'm sure! I've seen it, haven't I? I tell you, it *is* Chinese. Nothing on earth would make me believe that it was Ivy's child at all—if I didn't know."

"Has she seen it—seen it as you have?"

"She's seen it, and I suppose she *saw* it. She saw a speck of fluff or something on his coat when King-lo gave her a drink, and laughed at him for being untidy, and flicked it off."

"Did she seem to mind?" Snow asked.

"Mind? Mind a speck of fluff? Oh, the baby! Mind the awful Chinese look of it? She didn't seem to, but she must. And she'll hate it! How she'll hate it!"

"I hope not," Charles Snow said gently.

"Of course she'll hate it. I hate it now! And King-lo 'minded'!"

"How do you know?" Snow asked quickly.

"Oh, I don't know—but he did. How can I explain every single thing to you? You ought to know by yourself. I'm too upset to go on talking forever. He minded terribly, I tell you. He went to the window and stood looking for ages—at nothing. Even his back minded. He never stirred until Ivy called him back to her. He minds. I nearly dropped. Don't *you* mind, Charles?"

"I'm not glad," Sir Charles said gravely.

"Well," his wife conceded bitterly, "that's something. Not glad! Wait till you see it, Charles Snow! 'Finest race on earth!' Well, perhaps they are, but—" She finished the sentence and began another, but the rest of her words were quite inarticulate through the thick smother of fresh sobbing.

"Boy or girl?"

The commonplace and very usual question seemed to steady her.

"That's the worst of it," she answered desperately but clearly. "It's a girl."

CHAPTER LIV

RUBY SÊN did not hate her Chinese baby. And because she did not King-lo loved her with an added love.

Ruby loved her baby. It was *hers*—and Lo's!

Ruby Sên had a valiant soul, and something of Sên King-lo's valor and sweetness had crept into hers.

Mrs. Sên loved her wee daughter very much.

Sên King-lo loved his baby girl almost as tenderly as he loved the mother he had never seen. Once, in the demanding day of early wifehood when Ruby had asked him, as wives foolishly will, pathetically must, if his love of her was his great love, he had told her simply, bravely, "No Chinese loves any one else as he does his mother."

They all grew to love her—except Emma Snow—she never did.

They named their daughter "Ivy." Sên King-lo would have it so. But her signature was written on her face—a Chinese signature. Lady Snow had been right in *that*. Little Sên Ivy was unmistakably Chinese. Both Sên himself and Sir Charles Snow knew that they never had seen a being that looked more typically or more intensely Chinese. She had not a trace of Europe on her; but almost from the first Sên King-lo suspected that she had almost no trait of China in her, that—except for that outer sheath of Chinese beauty—she was all a Western.

Luckily for both the babies, Ruben was delighted with his sister and vastly proud of her—though he

called her, as soon as he could talk, "funny Ivy!"

But in one thing Emma Snow was wrong. Baby Ivy was very lovely, in her vivid, flower-like Eastern way: a lovely, laughing, pomegranate child. She was lovely from the first. New-born babies are not often beautiful, unless to mother eyes. Most of them have a smudged, unfinished look, and they come red-raw and wrinkled into life. But Baby Ivy's loveliness came with her, and it grew as she grew. Sir Charles Snow sometimes thought that, had she lived in China in the old imperial days, her face might have gained her the yellow chair of an Emperor's first wife and the throbbing desire of any countryman that ever saw her. The Trojan war was not fought for a woman; but wars have been fought so in Asia, and Snow smiled grimly, more than once, thinking that her Surrey birthplace had perhaps spared Asia bloodshed.

Soon after Christmas the Snows left Brent-on-Wold. Emma was due in Devon where their children had been holidaying with her mother, and Sir Charles was wanted at the Foreign Office. M. P.s and Barristers and even mere peers may take and make themselves long and frequent holidays, but woe betide us all if the Foreign Office took a breather! That Whitehall bulwark of Empire must, like Tennyson's brook, go on forever—though not often so tranquilly.

They stayed for the christening, and then the Sêns were left alone in their new home.

The baby throve, and Ruby was vigorous and active again. And Lo promised that she should ride with him soon.

Both secretly wondered if the local gentry was going to call, and, except for the other, neither cared.

The gentry was wondering the same thing and was

both more interested and exercised about it than were Mr. and Mrs. Sên.

Several ladies, younger ones, wished to call; several others, older ones, preferred to avoid the necessity. But that had nothing to do with it. None of them would dare to call, or to receive Mrs. Sên, unless Lady Margaret Saunders did; and, if Lady Margaret did, no other matron of Brent-on-Wold's upper-circle would presume not to do so.

Lady Margaret Saunders ruled Brent-on-Wold and its adjacent small estates, as completely and autocratically as Sên Ya Tin ruled in a coign of Ho-nan, and she ruled far less amiably, far more erratically. Sên Ya Tin was tyrannical but easy-going. There was nothing easy-going about Lady Margaret Saunders. She hectored the village shopkeepers, of whom her patronage was small; she alternately cajoled and abused the rector and almost invariably prescribed his texts; she had driven two curates away and sent one to the milder rule of the county asylum. She controlled the relieving officer, the cottage hospital, and the tennis club—although she'd never had a racquet in her hand. She directed the procedure of the cricket and football clubs and dictated the number of the buns and the strength of the tea with which they regaled visiting teams, though she had neither sons nor grandsons to bowl or to kick the national balls. She *was* the local flower-show, though the glass at "the big house" was not much and the grounds were more occupied with broccoli and potatoes than with roses and carnations. She had "early closing" changed from Wednesdays to Thursdays. And not even the cottage women who "went out to oblige" ever defied her.

No one defied Lady Margaret Saunders. She was not pleasing to look at and less pleasing to converse with.

She had a German face, which was a libel on her ancestors, and an enormous Jewish nose, which was a crueler libel on the Hebrew people. All her forebears were Yorkshire. She sniffed in public and nagged in private. No one liked her. No one disputed or challenged her acid authority. She ruled.

Why? Because it was her nature to rule. Dominance was her being, and her dominance was as direct and relentless as Niagara. Her force was Titanic, and her bad manners were irresistible.

But she was not only obeyed, she was courted. And Lady Margaret was not only courted, but reverenced.

The "gentry" was her creature, disliked her to a woman, and feared her to a man.

Lady Brewster was the woman most nearly admitted to her intimacy.

General Saunders had left a leg in the Kyber, and his other leg's foot as well. He spent his days now in a wheel chair. His wife called him "Polly," and paid very little attention to him—in public.

They were childless.

Lady Margaret Saunders called on Mrs. Sên, and then the "gentry" rushed to do the same.

The gentry of Brent-on-Wold was two doctors, the rector, a scattering of army officers—many of them retired, others still on the "List," and serving at Aldershot, Farnborough, Camberly and the War Office—a well-to-do musician who could neither play nor compose, a retired architect (who wished he hadn't), a novelist who did write but didn't seem to publish, and a veritable millionaire who had wandered in from Leadenhall Street (and escaped from Bayswater) in a Rolls Royce and a sable coat, with a chef, a maître d'hôtel and three footmen in his wake. Then there were a dozen others,

neither rich nor poor, who owned their own homes and each paid a cook and parlor-maid, did nothing for a living, and dressed for dinner—with, of course, their families.

Sên King-lo had not chosen the locality of their new home for its society. He had chosen it for its roses and the beauty of its hills and vistas. Nightingales had a leafy stronghold in the woods and gardens of Brent-on-Wold. The house suited them rather more than moderately. It was not too far from London for people who had as good a car as theirs was. Sên King-lo did not in any way intend that Ruby should be cut off from London or from London friends, or that he should even stay permanently in the countryside, if she should prove to dislike it. For himself he craved a little rest, or, rather, he felt that he must have it. It was rest, not rust, he craved and thought he needed: not to slack his industriousness but to slake it in a hill-set garden. He liked "Ashacres"; Ruby liked it when he took her to see it; and, almost best of all, its purchase and occupation were immediately available. So he bought it, and they furnished it and moved in in less than a fortnight from the day that Ruby first saw it. Money in sufficiency can speed up most human sloths—even lawyers and furniture dealers.

But they did not dismantle their Kensington house, or even close it, for Ruby should have her old home ready and waiting whenever she chose to go there.

Lady Margaret Saunders had not intended to call on Mrs. Sên, and Lady Margaret was almost as little given to changing her mind as Sên Ya Tin was. But she had a nephew at the Foreign Office whom she loved better than she liked him, and when she heard that Sir Charles and Lady Snow were staying at "Ashacres" and that the

influential diplomat was Mrs. Sên's cousin, she thought she'd think it over. Then Lady Brewster had the presumption to assume that Lady Margaret Saunders would not call on Mrs. Sên, and that settled it.

Lady Margaret called at once. She liked young Mrs. Sên, and she liked Chinese Mr. Sên, a perfect gentleman, and intelligent, very much indeed, and she said so steadily for several days.

Mr. and Mrs. Sên were as pleasantly established in Brent-on-Wold as they'd been in London.

CHAPTER LV

IT had been an unflawed year of renewal and achievement. They had ridden a great deal—always gay and happy and near to each other when they rode together—with something of the surprise and enjoyment of their first ride together always recurrent and fresh in their last. Sên King-lo danced as willingly as ever and as well. He still made music for his wife whenever she bade him. Their congeniality held, and he was still her lover.

The "gentry" had proved far less dull than it had seemed at first. King-lo found and made many interests here, and Ruby found several amusements.

Sên King-lo became a sort of lord of the manor, unofficial but acknowledged and accredited, as respected as the official one who, through no fault of his own, was very deaf, a trifle gouty, and more than a trifle parsimonious. Mr. Sên was the more popular and the more consulted of the two. Half the children in the village brought their troubles to him, and so did the postmaster, the rector, the constables,—there were three there and thereabouts—

and the sidesman; and more than once so did Lady Margaret Saunders.

Brent-on-Wold was a happier and a kindlier place, and a more awake and alive one, because a Chinese man had come to live there.

Ruby was entirely contented now, and she often chatted frankly, almost affectionately, of her days in China. Released from it, Ho-nan grew a very pleasant and interesting place in her memory and in her talk. She sometimes spoke of her bungalow on the Peak with a regret that was perfectly unaffected and sincere. Her husband was Chinese, and so was their name; but she did not mind in the least, because Lo was so thoroughly English.

If Sên King-lo had trod a ploughshare, he had trod it to good purpose; and, if he had, no one in England suspected it, unless Charles Snow did.

Snow caught a hint of terror in the younger man's eyes now and then—or thought he did; for he was never quite sure.

Next to her husband, Ruby Sên loved her children, and even King-lo did not know that she sometimes wished that Ivy might, as she grew, grow a little more English in appearance.

"I don't know how ever Ivy will bring herself to present little Ivy when she's old enough," Emma Snow had said to Sir Charles more than once. "I know I couldn't."

Sir Charles made no reply.

Debonair always, interested in everything that his wife cared for, boyishly ready to play tennis with her, to ride or sing with her, to help her entertain or be entertained, yet Sên King-lo found time to be alone sometimes and to spend a great deal of time with his children. Baby Ivy

spent hours on her father's knee—in some quiet garden nook when the day was warm enough.

The bond between the two was very close. Ruben's chief love was for his mother.

Ivy—little Ivy—was a child of many moods, and she had a vein of quarrelsomeness. The two nurses found her a handful. Ruben gave no one any trouble ever; but he was an odd little fellow. He liked to be alone and would lie for hours on his stomach by the brookside, watching one flower, or flat on his sturdy back, gazing raptly at the changing clouds. His color came and went at the odor of a rose; his eyes would fill at the singing of a bird.

Ruben had a "temperament"; Ivy had a temper.

But it only broke out angrily upon her father once.

They were sitting in the garden, the baby and the man. His arms were close about her, and she was playing with his watch. The day was very still; they were quite alone. A linnet called to its mate. At the sound King-lo raised his face to the sycamore tree above him and quoted softly but aloud a Chinese line that Li Po had made for Kublai Khan's daughter twelve hundred years ago. At the sound of the strange tongue she'd never heard before, the baby's Chinese face was convulsed with sudden fury, and she tore her tiny hand from the bright yellow timepiece and struck her father in the face with all her angry might.

When Sên King-lo was alone now he was very quiet. Neither book nor work occupied him. He sat almost motionless, with his eyes on the trees or turned with a brooding hungry look towards the East. A man might have sat and seemed so who kept tryst with memories and with a self that had gone far away. And when he

kept alone so, and the bell in the old village church chanced to ring, a strange wistful smile flickered slowly on his face.

It was May again. The snowballs were out, and the golden laburnum and the bluebells, and the early peas were hinting thinly in their pods. Sên King-lo knew what no one else suspected. He knew that his exile was nearly ended—unless indeed the angry gods of China would debar his very spirit from the East.

He feared it—but he hoped.

His bones would lie forever in the quiet churchyard here—for he had willed it so—until his ashes lived again in the petals of the flowers growing on his grave; but he knew that his soul would take its flight towards the East even while the English church-bells tolled his body's passing to its English grave. But he thought, he dared to hope and think, that some time, after centuries of homeless wanderings, perchance, though forever banished from his kindred "on high," the gods would give his spirit—at the Feast-of-Lanterns time, perhaps—leave to mingle with the spirits of his ancestors and be with them in Ho-nan, and look upon the living children of the Sêns as they came from the red-roofed homestead to the high hillside, to watch the long processions of the lanterns swaying, wending.

June had come. Sên King-lo was dying. He was dying as he had lived. He was dying in the garden, sitting easy in his cushioned wicker chair, a red rose on his knee, his eyes smiling into Ruby's, his hand upon her hair.

So quietly had his release come to him that until a

week ago no one had seen or heard it coming—no one but he.

A sudden spasm—here, too, in their garden—one afternoon had turned Ruby's happy chatter to a cry of terror.

The clutching, grinding pain had gone almost as it came, but she had summoned doctors and wired to her cousin.

The doctors spoke of indigestion, and one who was a grandfather had patted Mrs. Sên upon her shoulder and told her that it was "quite all right."

But Ruby Sên had seen the attack which the doctors had not, and her alarm did not pass. And King-lo bent his will and his love to comfort her alarm rather than to disabuse it.

Before Snow reached them, or the great man from Harley Street that Ruby had 'phoned for, the local doctors could make nothing of the case, and the London physician told Sir Charles frankly that he could make no more.

No other attack of pain came; but each day Sên moved a little more slowly, and his gray pallor deepened.

He took no farewells. He gave no last directions, made no last requests. He neither kept his bed nor moped. He was ready, and all that he could do for those he was leaving was in readiness.

He kept his wife's hand in his and was her lover to the last, because he loved her and because he knew that to have him that to the utmost moment of their comradeship would be the dearest, proudest memory he could give her.

But to Sir Charles, the day after Snow came, Sên King-lo lifted a corner of his curtain.

"I know," Sên said as they sat together for an hour

—the only hour that Ruby left him till he died—"that you will do all you can for Ruby—always."

Her kinsman nodded.

"But there is something I am anxious to say to you. I cannot lay the burden on Ruby, and I cannot lay it down. I must pass it on."

Snow held out his hand.

"Keep Ruben and Ivy in England—always—if you can. Build up to that. Life will go hard with them. They must pay the price I owe! But I believe that it will be a lighter price, and less galling, if they never know my people or my country. I wish that I might hope that neither my boy nor girl would marry."

That was the strangest wish a Chinese father ever framed.

But Charles Snow understood, and again he merely nodded.

" 'The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge,' " Sên King-lo quoted sadly. Then he said, "I fear least for Ruben, but I fear—terribly—for them both. Ruben is Chinese. He looks English, but he is thoroughly Chinese. If he marries, he should marry a woman of our people, a Chinese girl whose parents live here, just possibly. That will be so more and more, I believe. But I wish earnestly that he may not marry—or Ivy either. You know why. Teach Ruben to worship his mother, to garner his heart upon her, to live for her. It will not be difficult, I am sure, since his instincts are so intensely Chinese."

Snow wondered if his cousin herself might not marry and hated himself for letting the thought come to him here and now. She was still so young and so full of life and of beauty.

But Sên King-lo knew that Ruby would be Sên Ruby while she lived. He *knew.*

"It is for Ivy," King-lo went on, "that I fear most. Mere baby that she is, I know she is English. Yes, I am right. She is as English as Ruben is Chinese, more so perhaps. The mixture of race bloods has modified nothing racial for either of our children—fomented and intensified rather. Ivy is wholly English. I can see it every day. Sometimes when I have been alone, not often but sometimes, I have said something in Chinese—just to hear the Chinese words, just to taste them on my lips. I did, not long ago, when I was nursing her. She didn't like it. She loathed it."

That sounded fantastic—but Sir Charles did not think so. He had lived too long in China!

"An English girl with a Chinese face, an English soul and mind in a Chinese body! What she'll probably have to live through! I beseech the gods that she may never marry!"

Sir Charles Snow noticed the plural.

"An English girl in a Chinese body!" Sên's voice broke as he said it. And he said no more.

"I will do my best," Snow told him.

It was enough.

The specialist came again from London the next day, and again he spoke alone with Snow after he had seen Sên King-lo.

"I am completely in the dark," the great man said bitterly. "Mr. Sên is dying—I can't say how soon—but dying, if I know anything at all about my business. We doctors have to doubt that now and then, unless we are complete asses. I know that Mr. Sên is dying, or I think I do, because I can see that there is no grip on life

left in him; but I have not the remotest idea what is killing him, and that's flat. There's been a touch of heart trouble—no indigestion about it—but I suppose those fellows here had to call it something, and no wonder they barked up the wrong tree. I've been puzzled before—a doctor lives in one big maze of puzzle—but I never ran up against a puzzle like this before. Never! There has been a touch of heart trouble, but not enough to kill any man—scarcely enough to kill a mouse. I'd give a limb to know what is killing Mr. Sên."

"Then I'll tell you," Snow said quietly, "if you will regard it as professional confidence."

"Of course, of course. But—you know? Out with it, for Heaven's sake, man!" But the physician's eager voice was more skeptical than eager.

"Homesickness," Snow told him.

"By Jove, you don't believe that!" Dr. Foster was openly contemptuous. But, even so, he was interested. "Go on," he commanded. "How do you make that out?"

"I know Sên King-lo well, and I know his race," Snow replied.

"Well—well," the physician said after a pause. "I wonder—we might have tried it—strange things turn out true ones sometimes—I wonder—we might have tried it—sending him back to China—but, I'm afraid it's too late now. By Jove, I wish I'd been on the track of this case six months ago!"

"No," Sir Charles Snow told him, "you might not have tried it. He would not go."

"Tut! tut! A sick man must do what he's told, to get well."

Snow made no reply.

"I'd give a good deal to have been called in sooner—six months ago or more," the physician repeated.

"You'd need to have been called in nearly five years ago," Snow retorted, "and then you would have failed. I was on the case five years ago," he added bitterly, "and I failed."

"Indeed," Dr. Foster remarked limply. Harley Street does not over-value or over-esteem lay practitioners.

CHAPTER LVI

THEY were alone in the garden at sunset.

They had been sitting here, on the broad garden bench, hand in hand, since tea, but saying little. King-lo had left her a few moments ago and had gathered the rose that she was wearing at her breast, where he had pinned it.

"The sweetpeas need thinning over there," Lo said, pointing. Then he drew his hand across her face. "Ruby!" His eyes smiled into hers, and then, like a tired child, he laid his head on her shoulder.

And when she understood—it was some time—before her tears came—his wife bent and kissed him on the lips.

When the bell began to toll there was scarcely a window in the village at which a hand did not draw down a blind.

When Sir Charles Snow's letter reached Ho-nan, Sên Ya Tin proclaimed a year of mourning. Every lute was put away. Every woman laid aside her gay rich garments, her stickpins, and her face paints. All the Sêns—women, men and children, and all their people—were

clad in hempen sackcloth, and their rice was plainly cooked and scanted.

They gave Sên King-lo his funeral, the funeral of his rank, in the homestead of his fathers.

Sên Ya Tin walked behind a costly empty coffin, weeping, wailing, moaning, tearing her white disheveled hair, and she staggered as she walked.

And all his kindred followed her, and all their priests, servants and peasantry.

On his tomb, when the stone was sealed down above the empty coffin, they spread a princely feast: chicken, soy, lychees, melon, curd, and yellow wine in costly tiny cups—food for the spirit of lord Sên King-lo.

And Sên Ya Tin fasted till she fainted.

But in her heart Sên Ya Tin did not grieve. For she thought that it was better so.

The berries are red upon the holly. There is snow upon the graves. It is quiet in the churchyard.

THE END